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STATESBORO BLUES

NEW COLUMN! PERIPHERY'S JAKE BOWEN

ZAKK WYLDE

GOING LICK-FOR-LICK ON BLS's

DARIO LORINA

LATEST SHREDFEST O' DOOM!

STEVE HOWE
ONWARD WITH YES

MASTODON
PROG-METAL FROM THE HEART

TOM MORELLO
WHERE GUITAR MEETS EDM

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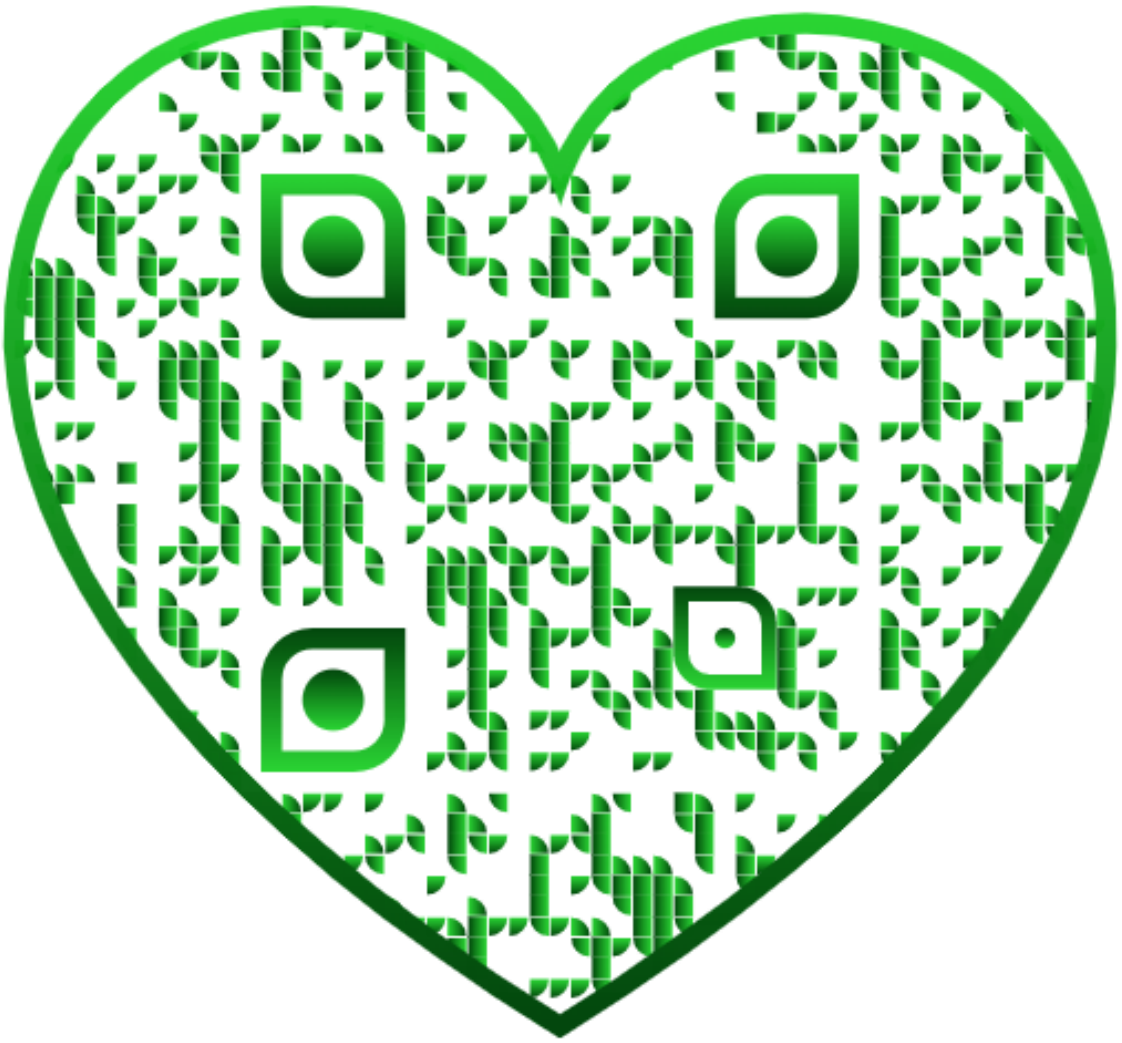
PLUS JOHN 5 | CHEAP TRICK | BAD RELIGION's BRIAN BAKER *& MORE*



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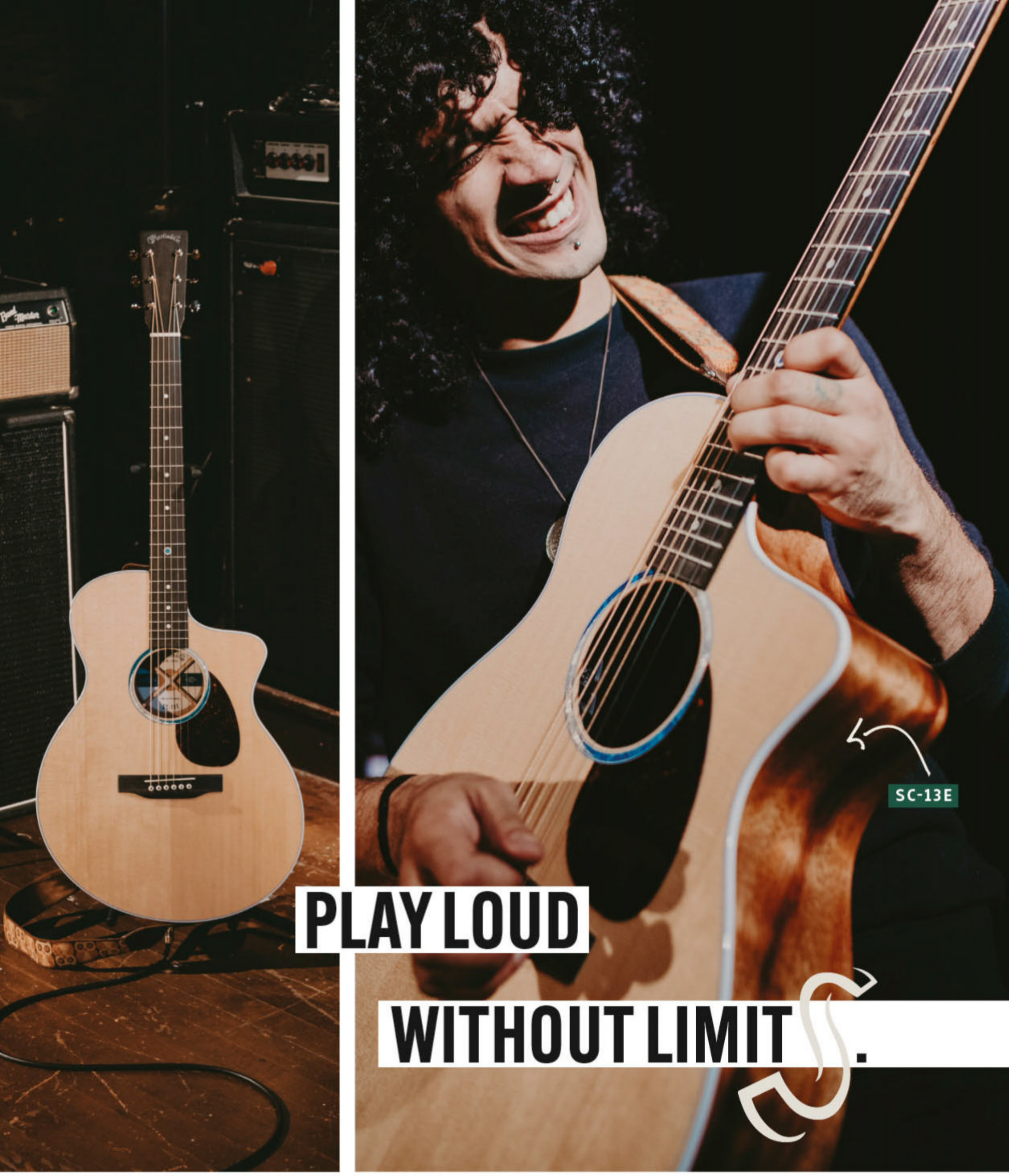

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TIME

MOD

LEVEL

1
2
3

TYPE

REVERB B

DAMPING

TIME

MOD

LEVEL

SUSTAIN

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A

B

BYPASS

REVERB

SUSTAIN

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JEN ROSENSTEIN

COVER PHOTO: JEN ROSENSTEIN / JENROSENSTEIN.COM

WOODSHED

VOL. 43 | NO. 1 | JANUARY 2022

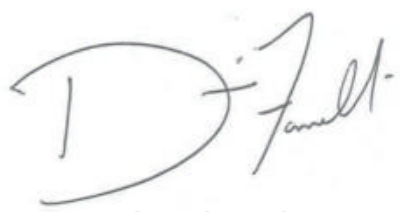
RENEGADE PAGES

AS ALL YOU *GW* subscribers undoubtedly noticed, the Tom Morello feature in the Holiday 2021 "Legends" issue experienced a bit of, um, bad luck. Due to a very unusual production error (on our end), the first three pages of the Morello feature were replaced with the first three pages of the Mark Tremonti feature from the December 2021 issue. As a result, we're re-running the entire Morello feature (all five pages this time!) in this issue, starting on page 36. I apologize to all you Morello fans and to every reader, whether you subscribe or just happened to find a copy of *GW* at the tire place moments before finding out that you *reeeeally* need to get your wheels aligned. And, of course, I apologize to Tom! And boy, do I love that red-background Travis Shinn photo that kicks off the feature...

A WEIRD COINCIDENCE: Speaking of unusual, I'd just like to let you know how crazy it is that the Scorpions' "The Sails of Charon" is the topic of this issue's Tonal Recall column (page 110) *and* one of this issue's three transcribed songs (page 96). These two departments of the magazine are planned separately, with different editors and writers involved — and there's also the fact that it often takes months to get transcription approval for songs. Anyway, let's just say it wasn't planned, although it is a very happy coincidence! Actually, you know what? I should probably make believe it was intentional. Oops — too late!

A NEW COLUMNIST: Please welcome Periphery guitarist Jake Bowen to the fold! His new column, All Ears, kicks off this month on page 79. Jake is actually the third Periphery guitarist to shoot a *Guitar World* column within the past 10 years, joining Mark Holcomb (Holcomb-Mania) and Misha Mansoor (The Djent Set). Anyway, we're thrilled to have him on board. Stay tuned for more column updates in the next few issues.

As always, here's hoping you enjoy the latest issue of *GW* (also known as issue 0547)!



DAMIAN FANELLI
Editor-in-Chief

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SOUNDING BOARD

Got something you want to say? **EMAIL US AT: GWSoundingBoard@futurenet.com**

We should've dUg deeper?

I thoroughly enjoyed the August 2021 *GW* and love my subscription. While reading the Performance Notes for Pearl Jam's "Jeremy," I was surprised to find no mention of bassist Jeff Ament's admiration for King's X bassist (and fellow 12-string user) Doug "dUg" Pinnick. Jeff is a huge King's X fan... and the outro to "Jeremy" is a direct homage to the outro from the King's X song "Out of the Silent Planet." dUg was inspired to pick up the 12-string bass while opening for Cheap Trick and playing Tom Petersson's bass, who then networked dUg to Hamer. These days, dUg has a series of his own Schecter basses, including a signature 12-string model. The 12-string bass is an amazing instrument — and I'm so glad to see "Jeremy" covered by *GW*.

— Dean Bibb

Sound the Sounding Board alarm

It's always with intense excitement that I greet the latest issue of *Guitar World*. However, as I thumbed through the pages of the December 2021 issue, my exhilaration soon turned to panic. Sounding Board had disappeared! I thought there must be an explanation for this because *Guitar World*, the amazing publication that it is, does not make mistakes. I knew Mr. Fanelli would have the answer, so in my hyperventilating state I checked out the message from the editor [Woodshed]: "Sounding Board is taking a vacation this month." Phew! As my pulse rate returned to normal, I reflected on the old phrase, "You don't know what you've got until it's gone." Sounding Board for me is one of the most important features of *Guitar World*. Whilst perhaps quite a simple section, I believe it has the powerful effect of bringing readers together, and it reinforces a real sense of community. I need you to know how vital this section is. Please don't scare me like that again!

— Craig Isherwood

Respect for the great Ernie Isley (and Charles Pitts)

I have several reasons to thank you for the coverage of Ernie Isley in the November 2021 Tonal Recall column. I wasn't playing then, but *3+3* was a big part of why I started. Some people point to Jimi Hendrix, but this music was what I wanted to hear. I never intended to copy anyone, but I stole every lick I could figure out from their records. I also want to thank you for the revelation of the name of the man who did the wah scratch work in the iconic "Theme from Shaft." Charles Pitts was a name I didn't know until I read that column. Both these players are criminally underrated, so it's great to see them getting a small portion of their due respect!

— Ed Stovall

Old wave?

You guys focus too much on old-timers, guitarists who have been around for at least three decades. Think of your recent covers: Metallica, George Harrison, Jimi Hendrix, Jimmy Page... OK, I'll give you credit for Greta Van Fleet! But I believe I know why you do this: New artists don't sell at the newsstand the way they did in, say 1989 to 2003. This is not your fault, of course. It's tied to a sense of retromania that started sometime in the early part of this century. Seriously, when I think of who you'd put out there, I start to scratch my head. Polyphia? Nita Strauss? So I understand, yet I can't help complaining! I'm sorry you're trapped in this "Catch 22" situation.

— Tom Clement

DEFENDERS *of the Faith*

Jimmy Martin

AGE: 48
HOMETOWN: Tega Cay, SC
GUITARS: Gibson Les Paul, Charvel So-Cal, EVH Wolfgang, G&L Rampage
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Audioslave "Like a Stone," Stone Temple Pilots "Plush," Skid Row "18 and Life"
GEAR I MOST WANT: 2019 Les Paul Standard

Alex Wilkie

AGE: 19
HOMETOWN: Turin, Italy
GUITARS: 1972 Gibson Les Paul Custom, 2013 Gibson SG Custom Kirk Douglas, 2011 Gibson J-180 Billie Joe Armstrong
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Elton John "Saturday Night's Alright," Alice in Chains "Man in the Box," acoustic Neil Young and originals by my band, Dionysian
GEAR I WANT MOST: Fender Stratocaster AV '62 Hot Rod Sherwood Green, '69/'70 Dan Armstrong Ampeg guitar, vintage Gibson J200 Natural

Mike "Cotton Toe" Scrivens

AGE: 52
HOMETOWN: Rochester, NY
GUITARS: Squier Classic Vibe Telecaster, Squier Standard Telecaster, Squier Affinity Telecaster
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Originals with my trio, plus "When the Levee Breaks," "Sweet Home Chicago" and "In the Pines"
GEAR I MOST WANT: Fender Player Series Telecaster

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READER ART

OF THE MONTH

If you've created a drawing, painting or sketch of your favorite guitarist and would like to see it in an upcoming issue of *Guitar World*, email **GWSoundingBoard@futurenet.com** with a scan of the image!

TOM PETTY BY RACHEL PENGELLY

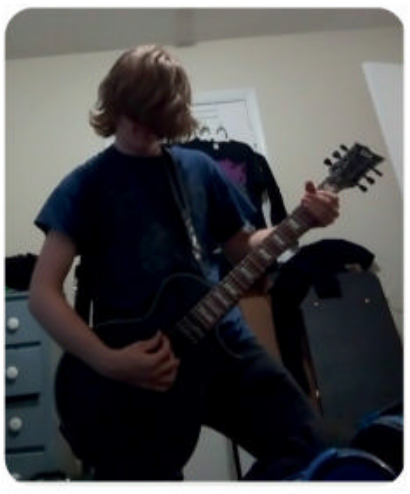
TREY ANASTASIO BY MICHAEL JONES

Greg Goodell

AGE: 39
HOMETOWN: Emmett, ID
GUITARS: Charvel San Dimas SoCal, Gibson Signature Player Plus, Gibson Firebird
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: My own stuff (Devil's County), plus the Offspring "Come Out and Play," Chet Atkins "Mr. Sandman," Van Halen "Eruption"
GEAR I MOST WANT: Gibson ES-335, Mesa/Boogie Rectifier Road King, Fender Super Six

Johnny Lee Cowger

AGE: 56
HOMETOWN: Waco, TX
GUITARS: 1980 Fender Strat, 1972 Fender Thinline Tele
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Billy Joe Shaver "Georgia on a Fast Train," Lone Highway "Old Porch Swing," Ozzy Osbourne "Mama, I'm Coming Home"
GEAR I MOST WANT: 1955 Fender Strat, 1965 Fender Twin Reverb



Jacob Smith

AGE: 18
HOMETOWN: Jonesboro, GA
GUITARS: ESP LTD EC-256, Epiphone SG Special, Fender Stratocaster
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Famous Last Words "To Play Hide and Seek with Jealousy," Get Scared "Sarcasm," Pierce the Veil "King for a Day"
GEAR I MOST WANT: Ibanez AR420, Schecter Demon-7 FR

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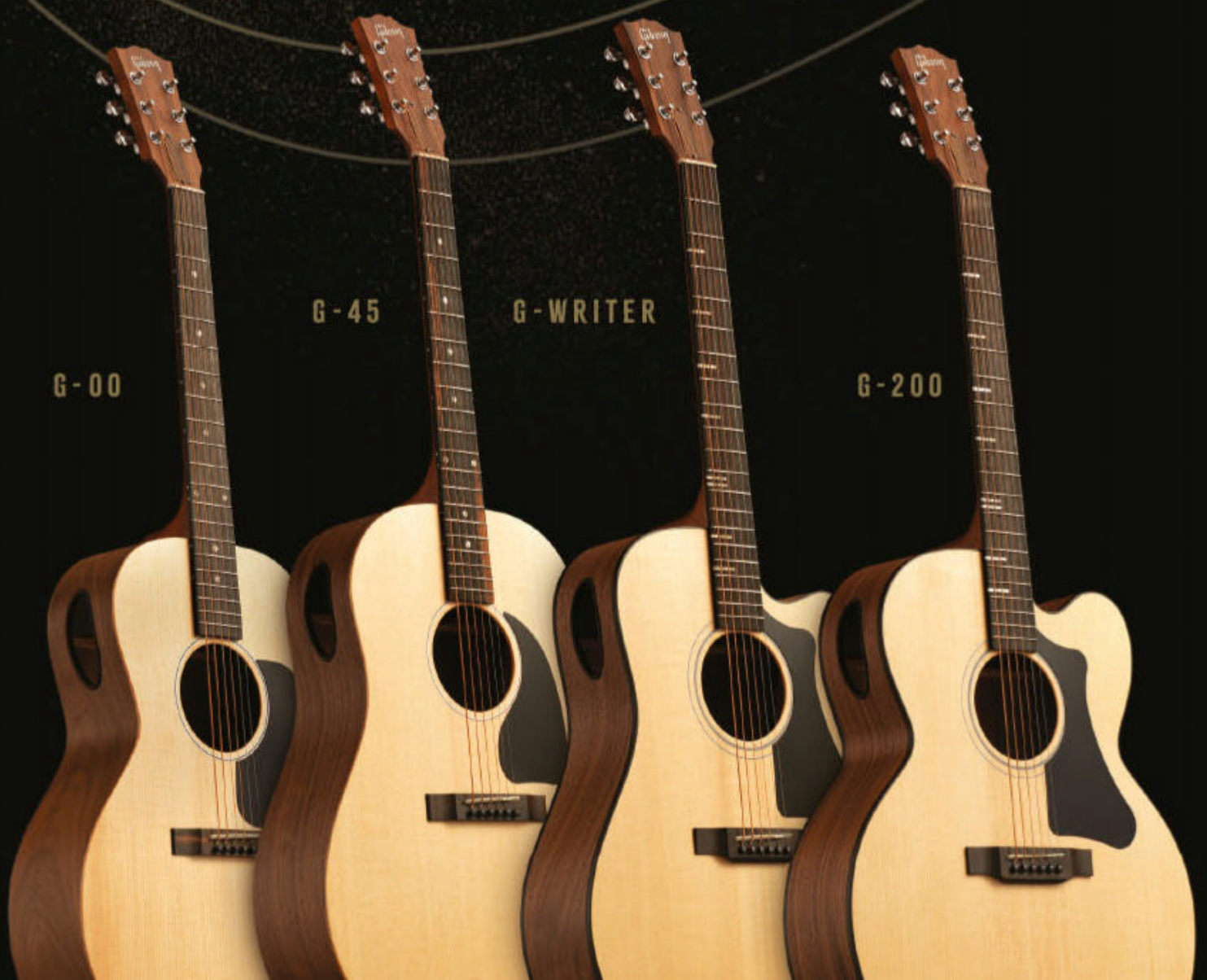
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Eric Bibb with a Kremona guitar; "It's made in Bulgaria, probably from the Sixties — a company that's still going strong," he says

MICHAEL WALL

Freedom Folk

NEARLY 50 YEARS AFTER HIS DEBUT ALBUM, ERIC BIBB CHANNELS NEW INSPIRATION ON *DEAR AMERICA*

By Jim Beaugez

GROWING UP THE son of New York folk singer and Broadway actor Leon Bibb in the 1960s, Eric Bibb's worldview stretched far beyond his family's Queens home — even though the now 70-year-old fingerstyle guitarist and singer-songwriter met many of his heroes, including Bob Dylan, in his own living room.

At the time, Bibb was just beginning to find his own path on the instrument by studying classical and jazz guitar. But by his own admission, he wasn't the best student. "I was mostly interested in learning how to accompany myself as a singer-songwriter," he says.

Bibb's real music education began in his teenage years when he joined the orchestra for *Someone New*, a talent showcase his father hosted on WNYC in the late Sixties that was a springboard for cellist Yo-Yo Ma and singer Barry Manilow. There, he watched session ace Stuart Scharf, who also played with Judy Collins and Carly Simon, back his father on lead guitar while Ron Carter of the Miles Davis Quintet thumped elastic grooves on his double bass. "All of those influences definitely seeped into my eventual coalescing of influences into my own style," Bibb says.

As he developed on his instrument, the folk fingerstylist experimented with picking techniques spurred by his classical training. His non-traditionalist approach even extended to how he holds his guitar, opting to wear a strap instead of balancing it on his thigh, the traditional and

default position.

"I've experimented with a lot of acoustic guitar picking," he says, "but using the strap [*while*] sitting down has become a favorite way of playing because the strap gives me a chance to not have the physical burden of supporting the neck of the guitar entirely, so my hands have a little bit more freedom of movement. I like to put my body into my playing more and more, even if I'm sitting down, and I find that the strap really helps me to engage that completely."

On *Dear America* [*Provogue, 2021*], Bibb reaches back through a lifetime of music and experiences on a song cycle that leads listeners on a journey through a past informed by the present. Although many of the songs were written before the incendiary year Americans experienced in 2020, they could easily describe the pandemic-bred isolation and racial unrest that spread across the country.

"Whole World's Got the Blues," for example, was written before the COVID pandemic, and "Emmett's Ghost," a reference to Emmett Till, a 14-year-old who was lynched for flirting with a white woman in 1955, was written before George Floyd was murdered by police in Minneapolis. But it was the title track that set the tone for Bibb.

"I didn't know it was going to be called *Dear America* until that song came along," he says. "Watching the news from afar in Scandinavia, watching what was unfolding in America with the advent of the [*previous*] administration, I was appalled by everything. I was glued to the television in a masochistic way watching what would come next, and I was disturbed to the point where the only way to quell my own anxiety was to actually write about it and share my thoughts in songs."

Bibb reunites with bassist Carter on the album's opening song, "Whole Lotta Lovin'," a gentle daydream that eases listeners into the album with a soothing acoustic riff. Their collaboration continues on "Emmett's Ghost," which finds Carter performing a walking bassline behind Bibb's spare, fingerpicked figures.

The guest list for *Dear America* also includes Memphis blues slinger Eric Gales, whom he met on the Joe Bonamassa-curated Keeping the Blues Alive at Sea cruise in 2019. Gales dropped into the studio in New York to contribute the fat, fuzz-toned licks that burn through the shuffling "Whole World's Got the Blues."

"He's the most innovative and exciting electric guitar player that I've come across," says Bibb, who first saw Gales play on the cruise. "I can't think of another guitar player who excites me more with that blend of technical virtuosity and deep understanding of the blues."

"[Eric Gales] is the most innovative and exciting guitar player I've come across. I can't think of another guitar player who excites me more with that blend of technical virtuosity and deep understanding of the blues"

Bibb's personality comes through in his left-of-center gear choices, as well. His guitar racks are full of esoteric acoustic guitars, including a baritone built by Daniel Stark in Germany that he used throughout the *Dear America* sessions. A Sixties-era Bulgarian Kremona guitar with two sound holes, pictured on the album cover, is heard on "Whole Lotta Lovin'" and "Emmett's Ghost."

"A lot of the guitars that are my favorite instruments, the ones that I go to for recording, are made by luthiers around the world," he says. The Kremona, he notes, is "a cheapo with a plywood top, but it's one of my absolute favorite guitars and has a kind of brittle, almost harpsichord-like sound with amazing in-built reverb because of the double sound hole."

He also plays more conventional guitars, including a custom Santa Cruz, a Lava Me 2 carbon-fiber guitar, a ladder-braced Collings, and a 12-string Otwin modified with a resonator that chimes on "Born of a Woman." On stage, he often runs these guitars through a Roland Jazz Chorus amplifier.

As a singer-songwriter in the folk tradition, Bibb says *Dear America* was a necessary album to make. "I feel like something was urging me, my muse was urging me, to share my thoughts and feelings on what was happening in America, because it's the country where I was born and raised.

"I had something to say," he adds. "My parents had something to say. The people that they associated with always had something to say about what was going on socially, and I just felt like I had to get in the conversation."

WHAT'S ON MY PLAYLIST

MARION BASCOUL & MARTIN HAMICHE OF AEPHANEMER

1

"Twilight of the Thunder God"
Amon Amarth

Marion: The melodic guitar work here is very characteristic of the band, not really featuring a lead guitar (apart from the solo), but rather two highly melodic rhythm guitars. This song is what made me want to learn to play guitar!

2

"Needled 24/7"
Children of Bodom

Martin: Children of Bodom massively influenced my songwriting, and while I love the neoclassical vibe of their first albums, I think this song is the one that fully captures the band's spirit.

3

"Ætti Mørkna"
Windir

Marion: A perfect example of rhythm and lead guitars complementing each other; this song also features the use of the classical counterpoint technique to create complex, yet delightful melodies.

4

"The Insight and the Catharsis"
Dimmu Borgir

Martin: I love the perfect balance between guitars and orchestrations. Dimmu Borgir is the band that taught me that classical instruments and guitars can be mixed in a beautiful way.

5

"Only for the Weak"
In Flames

Marion & Martin: This song is proof that melodies don't need virtuosity to have a huge impact. In Flames are masters of harmonized guitars, and the musicality of their guitar work keeps inspiring us today!

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"Space is good; sometimes I sit out for a few measures and let the song breathe," says Altered Five Blues Band guitarist Jeff Schroedl

Altered Five Blues Band

JEFF SCHROEDL'S SWEET DELIVERY GIVES BLUES FANS SOMETHING TO HOLLER ABOUT

By Amit Sharma

HOLLER IF YOU *Hear Me*, the sixth album from Milwaukee-based quintet Altered Five Blues Band, is a joyous celebration of all things earthy and honest. Their take on the blues is one that's multifaceted — taking inspiration from different eras and movements, as well as channeling elements of swing and jazz to add to their collective pentatonic power. For guitarist Jeff Schroedl, it all stems from his love for Joe Pass and Charlie Christian alongside heroes like Stevie Ray Vaughan and B.B. King.

What's the secret to sharing space with harmonicas, keyboards and other instruments?

Playing guitar alongside an organ and harmonica is much different from playing in a blues trio. I need a brighter tone to cut through the mix, and I carefully pick my spots to throw in lead licks and fills. I listen closely to the vocal and weave my guitar lines in the gaps. Space is good; sometimes I sit out for a few measures and let the song breathe.

"With slow blues, take your time. Don't empty your magazine too soon. Keep it simple and in control, and use long notes and space"

— JEFF SCHROEDL

The title track solo mixes different major and minor tonalities, as well as passing tones. Where'd you learn how to fuse country, blues and jazz like that?

I cut my teeth playing jazz, and listened to a lot of Joe Pass, Charlie Christian, Kenny Burrell, Pat Martino and Barney Kessel, as well as early B.B. King, T-Bone Walker and Grant Green. They all seeped into my own playing. I try to use all the colors in the palette if it makes sense for the song. "Holler If You Hear Me" swings hard, and almost anything goes when it comes to soloing over that one.

"Clear Conscience, Bad Memory" has some strong SRV seasoning. What advice can you offer to guitarists hoping to play like the late, great Texan?

With slow blues, take your time. Don't empty your magazine too soon. Keep it simple and in control, and use long notes and space. When you tell a story with your voice, you use inflection and sometimes vary your delivery of the words. The same applies to music. Don't always start on the downbeat and play evenly in time. Mix it up and don't think too much! That's a sure fire way to ruin the vibe. There's an old saying — 'It's not the meat, it's the motion.' That's especially true with blues.

What guitars and amps did you use on this album?

I used two Strats on the entire record — my 1966 and a 1962 that was at the studio. The '62 had a lot of mojo, so I played that quite a bit, using different pickup combinations. I mostly plugged directly into the amps and cranked them up to about eight — including my 1968 Super Reverb, tweed Bassman and 1964 Vibroverb.

AIGARS LAPSA

Former recording engineer Sarah Tudzin on stage (and off) with Illuminati Hotties

Illuminati Hotties

SARAH TUDZIN'S ENGINEER EARS DIAL UP THE GUITAR TONES ON THE L.A. ROCKERS' NEW ALBUM

By Jim Beaugez

SARAH TUDZIN'S RÉSUMÉ as a recording engineer is stacked with artists like Macklemore, Weyes Blood and even the original Broadway cast recording of *Hamilton*. But she saves her most creative sonic experiments for her own band, the L.A-based Illuminati Hotties.

On *Let Me Do One More* [*Hopeless*], the former Sunset Sound staffer crafted a collection of bouncy, scrappy indie-rock songs while eschewing stomp boxes, instead plugging her Fender Telecaster straight into a Fender Princeton amplifier for guitar sounds.

"It just sounds exactly how a guitar is supposed to sound in my mind," she says. "It's not blasting extreme and it's also not a tiny little microwave of an amp. It really just gets what you need and is bare bones in the best way."

Many of Tudzin's guitar riffs, like the off-kilter riff at the center of opener "Pool Hopping," come in bursts of inspiration while the songs themselves come later — sometimes after showing them to touring guitarist Sapphire Jewell, who usually has more traditional, streamlined ways of playing them.

"I feel like that's sort of the story with a lot of the guitar riffs and the more flashy-sounding stuff on the record," she says. "I figured out how to train myself into doing it the right way, and then oftentimes I'll bring it to the band and they'll have a much more measured and obvious way of playing the stuff that I thought of in a live context."

On the delicate "The Sway," a song she's attempted to capture in the past, Tudzin recorded layers of herself and Jacob Blizard [*of Lucy Dacus' band*] playing acoustic guitars around an omnidirectional microphone. The wall-of-guitars effect, which she labeled "guitarchestra" in her Pro Tools session, finally captured the dreamy sound she sought.

"In my brain [*it always*] sounded like Dave Matthews Band, and that's definitely not how I wanted it to sound," she laughs. "You hear a lot of room, you hear a lot of life in that acoustic guitar sound, and all of a sudden it felt like what I wanted the song to feel like, which was much more intimate and sentimental."

"I always feel like I'm playing in the sandbox when I'm making music with a guitar, because I feel like there's so much for me to learn still"

— SARAH TUDZIN

Although she is trained on piano and other instruments, Tudzin uses her lack of formal guitar knowledge to her benefit in Illuminati Hotties.

"I always feel like I'm playing in the sandbox when I'm making music with a guitar, because I feel like there's so much for me to learn still."

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Brian Baker — with a Gibson Les Paul Junior — on stage with Bad Religion

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Blitzkrieg Rock

PUNK LEGEND BRIAN BAKER KEEPS BAD RELIGION — AND FAKE NAMES, HIS LATEST PUNK SUPERGROUP — ROLLING WITH HIS STASH OF VINTAGE GUITARS

By Jim Beaugez

"THIS WHOLE JOURNEY is based on right-place, right-time, and luck, for the most part," says Bad Religion guitarist Brian Baker about playing music for a living. "I didn't realize I was a professional musician until I'd been one for 20 years."

That may come as a shock to fans who have followed Baker through his time with punk legends Minor Threat and Dag Nasty, as well as the underrated late-Eighties L.A. sleaze-rock band Junkyard. But it wasn't until he landed his current gig with the O.G. SoCal punk crew that he was able to give up his day job.

"In Junkyard [*who were signed to Geffen Records*], I think we got a thousand bucks a month for a while there," he says, "and that was just from stupidly selling our publishing and merchandise rights. Just being drunk and dumb and in your early 20s. I didn't realize I was a professional, doing-it-for-a-living-guy until I was in Bad Religion for a little while."

Baker could argue that his career began as early as age 12, when he was thrust onstage at a Santana concert in Detroit. He and some friends had scored backstage passes, and when Baker, then a budding guitar player, walked past a room full of guitars, he picked up one and started playing. Some members of Santana's crew saw him, and during the band's encore a roadie handed him a guitar and ushered him out of the wings.

"I'm standing in the middle of the stage in the spotlight, and Carlos Santana comes to me and goes, 'What's your name?' Like, 'Oh, Brian.' And he walks me to the front. I got this guitar on. It's live. And he says

in the mic, 'This is my friend Brian!' They start playing 'Black Magic Woman,' and I just remember kind of noodling along. I know I found the key, whatever it was, and was playing my child solos."

Perhaps more remarkable, though, has been Baker's ability to adapt his guitar playing to the dozen or so bands he's performed and recorded with during his career, although he's prone to deflect. "I basically have played the same way in every band, because I'm not that complicated," he deadpans, brushing off the suggestion. "I don't really know much more than what I do, which is minor pentatonic scales that sound like Gary Rossington. I mean, not even Allen Collins."

Baker's right hand earns his keep in Bad Religion, crunching speedy riffs with precision and dexterity, while his left guides the eight-bar eruptions of "ridiculous metal solos" he often plays between verses. It's easy to overlook that he had the job backing Peter Buck in R.E.M. for their amped-up *Monster* tour in 1995. Before rehearsals started, though, Bad Religion called with an offer he couldn't turn down: instead of being a hired-gun utility guy, he would be a full member of the band. The choice was easy, even if the call he had to make wasn't.

"[*It was*] horrible because I love R.E.M.," he says. "They were totally cool about it, and I found the guy that they wound up taking. It was cool. It worked out well for everybody."

Baker grew up worshipping primal players like Angus and Malcolm Young of AC/DC after being weaned on the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. As a teenager in 1980, hard rock coexisted with punk, at least in the insular Washington, D.C., scene. It wasn't uncommon to listen to Van Halen and punk rockers like Discharge back to back. The range of styles he grew up on informed the melodic tendencies he brought to hardcore punk in Dag Nasty, while his shit-kicking roots came to the fore in Junkyard. In the latter, Geffen paired Baker and the boys with A-list producers Tom Werman and Ed Stasium for albums in '88 and '90, respectively, and landed them the opening slot on a run of arenas and amphitheaters for a resurgent, reunion-era Lynyrd Skynyrd. Still, the stardom enjoyed by other L.A. bands eluded them.

"We were ugly [*and*] dirty. [*Our music*] was like Motorhead meets Skynyrd," he says. "If you're listening to the XM hair-metal stations and one of our songs drops in between Winger and Dokken, it sounds like a whole 'nother life form."

One of Junkyard's lasting contributions to hard rock was passing the baton to the Black Crowes by giving them their first

national tour, a six-week run across the U.S. "It was fortunate that our audience didn't realize how much better the Black Crowes were than we were until after the tour was over," he laughs. "It wasn't that classic 'Guns N' Roses blowing Aerosmith off the stage' thing — we still held our own. Just time proved that the Robinson brothers were actually incredible songwriters, and that their band was real and they knew what they were doing."

Stepping into an established band for the first time in Bad Religion, Baker staked out a spot somewhere between playing the songs note-for-note and improvising his own parts. "I refined my rhythm playing a little bit because they were stylistically a little different than I was," he says. When it came to replicating guitar solos originally performed by Brett Gurewitz, whom Baker replaced but has since rejoined, he took a different approach. "If one had a melody line you could hum, I would attach myself to the melody line, but then I would go other places because Brett is really more of a stylist. He does a lot of noisy, artistic stuff that I was just not able to reproduce. So I would throw in my own, like, Billy Squier riff instead of whatever he was doing."

"I don't really know much more than what I do, which is minor pentatonic scales that sound like Gary Rossington. I mean, not even Allen Collins"

While he's reliably coy about his own guitar playing, Baker is enthusiastic about gear, and vintage gear in particular. On the road, he takes two of his three '55 Gibson Les Paul Juniors, both of which were refretted and loaded with ceramic Seymour Duncan pickups, while he keeps a "clean" '55 Junior and a '57 Special at home for safekeeping. He's not strictly a Gibson guy, though; he has Telecasters and Tele-type Nash T Series guitars in his collection, as well as Strats and Jazzmasters.

"When you want a guitar to sound like a Jazzmaster, why not have a Jazzmaster? It's a tool," he says. "I'm not known for playing Rickenbackers, but I sure as shit have a 330 [*and*] a 360 12 [*-string*], because you have to, because that's the sound."

Baker says he was late to the collecting game and only started acquiring instruments a decade ago, after prices shot up when Billie Joe Armstrong of Green Day traded his Fernandes S-style "Blue" for an LP Junior. "My friend Jonny [*'Two Bags' Wickersham*] in Social Distortion, I hate him," he jokes. "He got a '58 TV model for like $1,100, and he has a bunch of Juniors that were thousand-dollar guitars. He's got a '54 Goldtop that I think was like $1,200. You just want to kill people like that, because he's hanging out in Social Distortion playing a $30,000 guitar. I love him."

With amplifiers, though, Baker is monogamous. His '89 horizontal-input Marshall JCM 800, which he bought new while in Junkyard, is still his go-to amp. Even after Chris DeMakes of Less Than Jake convinced him to get a pair of Kemper profiling amps to take on tour, he stuck by the sound of his JCM. "It's just the perfect amp — it's that good Marshall," he says. "And that one profile is still the one thing that's in each Kemper I have, and the only thing. I use just that profile of my own head."

When he's not banging out riffs in Bad Religion, Baker keeps his gear in working order playing with bands that aren't so much side projects as they are punk-rock supergroups. Fake Names, which put out an eponymous album in 2020, pairs Baker with members of S.O.A., Embrace, Girls Against Boys and Soulside, fronted by Dennis Lyxzén of Refused; he also recently formed Beach Rats with members of Jersey punks Lifetime and the Bouncing Souls.

"[Fake Names] sounds a little like late-Seventies U.K., but it's not new wave, and it's got some classic rock elements," he says, before getting in one more jab of self-deprecation: "No one's trying. There's no focus. It's just a bunch of guys who've known each other forever getting in a room and seeing what sticks. That's how everything starts when you first start playing music. And it's such a pleasure to be able to do it now at my advanced age."

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Cheap Trick's Rick Nielsen: "Everybody in Nashville plays guitar great. I'm glad I'm not competing with those guys. Not that I'm great in any city, but at least I'm different!"

ECHOES FROM ANOTHER WORLD

Cheap Trick's RICK NIELSEN talks John Lennon, Jeff Beck, "cool little guitars" and the band's milestone 20th album, *In Another World*

BY **JOSHUA M. MILLER**

PHOTOGRAPH BY **ADAM GASSON**

RICK NIELSEN DOESN'T always take himself too seriously. Music, however, is another story. He vividly recalls working at his father's music store in Rockford, Illinois, as a kid and being surrounded by interesting characters. It was hard work, but it was educational.

"I started working when I was 8," he says. "I goofed off a lot, though I still do... [*Laughs*] [I remember] the different people I'd meet and the different music I was around — all the Top 40 records and the guitars. I started out as a drummer, so I was most interested in drums, but then I got addicted to guitars. They were easier to carry around. I enjoyed meeting all the different people. I rented Sam Kinison a PA because he was an evangelist in those days!"

Nielsen's love for music has remained steadfast, and he's been a cornerstone of Rock and Roll Hall of Famers Cheap Trick — which also features singer/rhythm guitarist Robin Zander and bassist Tom Petersson — since they started out in 1973. It's resulted in an impressive string of hits, including "If You Want My Love," "Dream Police," "Surrender," "I Want You to Want Me" and "The Flame," not to mention that aforementioned Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction, which took place in 2016.

Earlier in 2021, the band released their milestone 20th studio album, *In Another World* — their first since 2017's one-two punch of *We're All Alright!* and *Christmas Christmas*. It's packed with overarching hooks, playful, tongue-in-cheek and optimistic lyrics — not to mention a build-up of energy that hits like a cascading tidal wave. Nielsen credits the band's Midwestern upbringing as the catalyst that keeps them going strong after nearly five decades — often playing more than 150 nights a year — which is why it was so tough for them to slow down when the pandemic hit. Fortunately, when the shutdown occurred, they had *In Another World* in the can and pretty much ready to go. It was recorded — pre-pandemic — at Love Shack Studios in Nashville.

"Everybody in Nashville plays guitar great," Nielsen says. "I'm glad I'm not competing with those guys. Not that I'm great in any city, but at least I'm different! We're Cheap Trick. We do what we do. We're in competition with everybody, but, then again, not really. We're in competition with ourselves."

Academy Award-nominated producer/songwriter Julian Raymond, who produced the album, has essentially become the fifth member of Cheap Trick in recent years. They've been friends for more than three decades. "Julian understands our music, our strengths, weaknesses and personalities," Nielsen says. "It's easy to work with him. He never lets us slack off or become stale. It's fun, fast and creative working with him as he can also sing, play, write and arrange a song, and most of all he never loses sight of who we are, where we've been and where we're going."

Nielsen is also proud to have played with his son Daxx, the band's touring drummer, since 2010. Daxx's drumming can be heard on the band's most recent albums, including *We're All Alright!* and *In Another World*. "It's very comforting. He's a smart kid with an encyclopedic mind who knows all the chords to every song and tempo," he says. "Our combined age has now averaged decades younger."

As with past Cheap Trick albums, the band wrote *In Another World* through collective creativity. Members would typically workshop ideas in individual studios and share them with each other to be built on. "We don't write with a specific idea in mind or a specific task that we have to do," Nielsen says. "You get a bunch of songs together, and before you know it, it's an album. We wrote more songs than these. It's like getting a pile of songs and flushing them out, seeing how they do.

"I always play [*my parts*] according to the song," he continues. "If it's a fast song, I'd better step it up. I always try to do what the song dictates, at least what it dictates to me. We've recorded probably 400 or 500 songs, so there's no set pattern of how we do anything. We try to get a good, basic track on everything, then we go from there. A lot of times we just use the whole basic track, though — drums, bass and even vocals. Because we've been doing this a long time, so we know what a mistake sounds like. We don't try to be something that we're not. I'm not a virtuoso. I'm a songwriter that plays rhythm guitar — and once in a while I have to play lead. So, once again, it's like the song tells me what the [*song is about*]."

Cheap Trick perform in Los Angeles in early 2020; [*from left*] Rick Nielsen, Tom Petersson, Daxx Nielsen and Robin Zander

Most days Nielsen isn't too far from a guitar. During our interview, he'd occasionally strum his '62 Dwight Coronet, one of the many models he collects.

"I'm playing it sitting here in the chair, not plugged in or anything," he says. "It's a cool, little bang-around guitar. I think they were $147 new in 1962. And they're still good. They're just cool little guitars. They're like a Les Paul Junior or SGs of that era. Single pickup, single P90."

His collection, which he's built up over the years, is rich and diverse. He rattled off a handful of guitars that especially played a part on the album — a Rick Nielsen Signature Les Paul, '65 Gibson SG, Fender Esquire Custom, '58 Gibson ES-335, Rickenbacker 12-string, Gibson SG with P90s, '51 Tele, checkerboard-themed Hamer Explorer, '64 Epiphone Wilshire, a '59 Les Paul TV Model Junior double cut in TV Yellow and a red Gibson Firebird III Reverse.

"I don't use any pedals or anything like that, so it's like I just run straight into my amp," he says. "They all have a different sound, but some sound better than others. Something that might sound great on one track just doesn't fit with another track. And for the most part, I use the same amps for everything I do. [*These include*] a 4x12 bottom with a Sixties Marshall 50. There's a Vox AC30 and an Ebo Customs Del Rio, which was made in Nashville. But my main amp is — and I have six of them — a Fender Deluxe. I think they're from 1976, but they've all been modified by Paul Rivera before he started an amp company [*Rivera Amplification*]. He put heavy-duty transformers and massive volume switches on them. That's what I use live and in the studio." GW

Sampling *IN ANOTHER WORLD*, track by track...

"Light Up the Fire"
Nielsen says he played his interpretation of Jeff Beck's solo on the Yardbirds' "Happenings Ten Years Time Ago" [*which also features Jimmy Page on guitar*]. "I stole — or was very influenced by — their song," he says. "If you listen to both songs, you'll see I'm not as good, but I really liked the Yardbirds." Nielsen recalls seeing the Yardbirds in 1965 and says he sold Beck a guitar in 1968, the second Les Paul he ever owned, a 1959 model with serial number 91864. "[*Jeff*] was my favorite guitarist then and he's still my favorite," Nielsen says. "I know him; we've played together... He was great and very innovative, and he's just always improved. A lot of other guitar players, they're still good — but he's just one of the best, taste-wise, tone-wise, and his playing is impeccable."

"Another World"
"It's kind of like an inspirational church-ish-sounding recording," Nielsen says. "It's got a nice anthem feel to it and [*it's*] a bit inspirational — [*from*] a kind of church I wouldn't mind going to."

"The Summer Looks Good on You"
"Straight Rolling Stones rock 'n' roll, with a little bit more harmony than they use."

"Boys & Girls & Rock N Roll"
Nielsen says this riff was a challenge to play as he had to block out the riff to "Takin' Me Back" from 1978's *Heaven Tonight*. "It confused me every time," he says. "I don't think I thought about it while we were doing it, but as it gets done it reminds me of the Rolling Stones and Stooges and a tinge of old Aerosmith. But otherwise, it's just Cheap Trick."

"Gimme Some Truth"
This John Lennon cover — the original version of which was transcribed in *GW*'s December 2021 issue — features former Sex Pistols guitarist Steve Jones. It was a poignant experience for Nielsen as he and original Cheap Trick drummer Bun E. Carlos worked on the sessions for Lennon's 1980 album, *Double Fantasy*, his last album to be released during his lifetime. The original versions of "I'm Losing You" and Yoko Ono's "I'm Moving On" featuring their performances weren't used on the album, but the former was later released as part of *John Lennon Anthology*.

"[John] will always be one of the best writers in the business," Nielsen says. "Working with him was one of the highlights of my career. But that was 40 years ago. So it didn't really have any personal impact on me other than to bring back memories. I'm still as sloppy as I was back then, and the song called for it."

"Final Days"
This swampy Chicago blues tune features harmonica by Grammy-nominated singer and Wet Willie frontman Jimmy Hall. "We'd never really worked together, but [*Jimmy Hall and Steve Jones are*] are all pro, and they know what they're doing. I think they got a kick out of playing with us," Nielsen says. "Jimmy, he's terrific. And Steve, he's fun to work with."

AMY SUSSMAN/GETTY IMAGES

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JOHN 5

THE COMMITTED SINNER

JOHN 5 — a guy who really, really, really loves playing guitar — tells you everything you need to know about *SINNER*, his brand-new solo album featuring a QUEEN cover, some carefully honed riffs — and guest appearances by DAVE MUSTAINE and KISS man PETER CRISS

JOHN 5 REALLY LOVES PLAYING guitar. It might seem like a redundant statement; he's a professional guitarist being written about in a guitar magazine, after all. It'd stand to reason he enjoys picking up the instrument every now and again.

But this can't be stressed enough: John 5 really, really, really loves playing guitar. Put aside the fact that instead of taking well-earned vacations when he's not on tour with Rob Zombie, he collaborates with artists as varied as Rod Stewart, Lynyrd Skynyrd and Ricky Martin and puts out solo albums, including his latest, *Sinner*. Ignore the fact that his Instagram is peppered with tour preparations consisting of running scales while trotting on a treadmill.

Let's put it this way: When most guitarists sit down for an interview, they get on the phone and answer the questions. Sometimes they gush about a new project or a new signature axe, but the format is consistent. When the man born John William Lowery sits down for an interview, he insists on a Zoom call and appears on the screen holding his signature frost gold Fender Telecaster. It's a guitar that's been so well-loved that he recently had to replace the pickguard because of wear and tear.

INTERVIEW BY ADAM KOVAC ★ PHOTOS BY MATT WILSON

"I'm just mostly comfortable with this guitar," he says. "The metal was worn in. And now, already you can see it's getting worn away again and it's only been a month or so."

Throughout our interview, John 5 doesn't just answer questions about *Sinner:* he offers an intimate and unprompted playthrough of favorite tracks, demonstrating riffs and solos (and only occasionally getting distracted by one of the Sphynx cats strolling over his coffee table).

So, yeah: John 5 really loves playing guitar, and that love is all over *Sinner*. Which isn't to say this is the typical shred album. Sure, there's mind-blowing technique sprinkled throughout the 10 tracks; lightning-fast arpeggios on album opener "Welcome to the Island," sweeps and taps galore on the verses of "Euphoria," and, of course, the country runs that have become a John 5 signature on a demented version of Les Paul and Mary Ford's "How High the Moon."

What's most noticeable on *Sinner* is just how concise everything is. On previous solo records, John 5 would go off on whatever tangent his fertile imagination would take him, which resulted in some very inventive, if somewhat unfocused, music. Here, that cerebral chaos has been finely honed. The album is eclectic (this is a guy who spent an early portion of his career backing k.d. lang, after all) but keeps from meandering.

"I love rock, mostly, but I just love music — and that's what's most important. I just love all these different kinds of guitar playing there is. All these different kinds of guitar players and styles, I try to use that in my records. It's just what I watch on TV, it's what I do and I try to incorporate all these cool licks with heavy rock music. People really enjoy those parts of the show because it's not just metal, metal, metal music in your face," he says, veering off into a quick chicken pickin' run.

It's entirely possible that the blade-sharp songwriting on *Sinner* is a result of John 5, like the rest of the world, not having a ton else to do while working on it.

During *Sinner's* creation, there were no tour dates with Rob Zombie or with his solo band, the Creatures. Los Angeles, where John 5 lives, was on strict lockdown. During the recording of the album, he admits to sneaking out to get to the studio as often as possible, lest he slowly go mad at home and resort to having to make sourdough like an ordinary person.

"What was wonderful is there were no distractions because there was nothing going on, so I had a chance to really work hard on this record," he says. "[*Producer*] Barry Pointer had a lot to do with the production. He was incredible, and we worked so hard on this record because we had time. We just went through everything with a fine-tooth comb. I wanted to do everything as a performer. The only thing I didn't do as a performance was on 'Welcome to the Island.' All these arpeggios, the second part is in a different tuning. So that's the only thing I really changed."

The end result is an album where the firepower is often kept in reserve, allowing electronic textures and grooves to come

"I never dreamt of being a rock star or people knowing my name or even doing an interview," John 5 says

★ ★ ★

front and center, along with John 5's tight and focused rhythm playing.

"I love a great riff! I try to write great riffs as much as I can," he says, launching into the rhythm part that anchors "Euphoria." "People have to be attracted to the riff, the first part of the song. It's very important — and then you can put all the craziness on top of it. That's how I like building the songs, either it's a cool riff or a cool lick or something like that — and [*then I*] kinda put it all together. [*I*] put a cool chorus together and make a fun instrumental song that I really enjoy. It really is just from the heart, and people gravitate toward that. They know it's real."

Among the people who have been pulled into John 5's gravity are some of *Sinner*'s guest stars. Carla Harvey, singer for gore-meets-glam metal band Butcher Babies, pops up on "Euphoria" while Mr. Megadeth himself, Dave Mustaine, guests on "Que Pasa." Rather than use such a notable and recognizable metal vocalist in a conventional way, John 5 puts Mustaine's signature snarl to novel use, essentially using him as a living sample in the chorus.

"That was a James Brown sample, saying 'Can't pass the people, can't pass the—!" John 5 says. "It was such a cool James Brown thing — but we couldn't use James Brown. I was like, 'It would be rad if we could use Dave Mustaine.' I'm a huge Megadeth fan and I know Dave's assistant, who played him the track — and he liked it. I was so happy he agreed to do it, because he sounds amazing. It sounds so much better than the original we had, so I'm just honored he did that. It's so cool because Dave was just Dave. He listened to it once and just did his Mustaine. That's what I loved about it — you can hear that growl and everything."

Equally interesting is where vocals were not deployed. Alongside the Les Paul and Mary Ford cover, John 5 gives his instrumental take on a few other classic tunes, including Queen's rockabilly throwback "Crazy Little Thing Called Love." While John 5's playing stays mostly true to Brian May's phrasing (which, in itself, is a loving homage to Elvis Presley sideman Scottie Moore), he throws in some of his signature country runs, all while covering Freddie Mercury's vocal line.

"I just love that Chet Atkins style, and I love the Elvis approach to it when Queen wrote it. I just thought, 'My god, this is such a great song to bring Chet Atkins' style to," he says, before once again turning up his volume knob and running through some of the song's recognizable phrases.

The idea to do the song came about from one of John 5's non-guitar related hobbies: scrolling through Instagram.

"I saw my buddy on Instagram playing a version of it, and I was like, 'Oh my God, that's rad.' That inspired me to go through with the song.

"I try to use Instagram as a learning tool, to show people, 'Check this out, check this out.' That's what I do as well. I look at other guitar players all day and go, 'Wow, that's a cool idea.'"

And then there's the album closer, a surprisingly faithful instrumental adaptation of Ray Charles' "Georgia on My Mind." It's on this track that subtlety reigns entirely.

"I figured out these cool chords and it just really worked well," he says as he picks his way through it. "I love that song so much and came up with this little jazzy approach to it."

Of course, it wouldn't be a John 5 track if there weren't a curveball. The track features original Kiss drummer Peter Criss, but rather than putting the most bluesy vocalist to ever grace that not particularly bluesy band's lineup to work on vocals, Criss just provides some percussion and a spoken-word intro where he pontificates on the sheer, mind-blowing weirdness of *this* guitarist playing *this* song.

"He absolutely killed it. He did two takes of it," John 5 says. "There's some tricky parts to it; I just kept the best time that I could, and he nailed it right away."

If this were John 5's first solo album, it would be hard to imagine names like Mustaine and Criss appearing in the credits. *Sinner* is, above anything else, the work of a guitarist who has long since hit his stride technique-wise and is settling into a new phase of his career — if not an elder statesman (he is, after all, only 51; though, it must be said, he looks 15 years younger) than a member in good standing of the guitar establishment. That is, someone who has the clout to get his phone calls returned while he chases his muse, no matter how offbeat she might be.

"I never dreamt of being a rock star or people knowing my name or even doing an interview. I'm so thankful for that and for just something I do in my pajamas from the day into the night. I don't take it for granted. I'm so lucky and fortunate to do what I'm doing."

As we speak, John 5 no longer has to worry about sneaking out to play some music. After a year and a half where he, along with most other musicians, couldn't play in front of an audience, he's got a full dance card: a headlining tour of clubs, some dates with Rob Zombie and then more solo shows, this time opening for Yngwie Malmsteen. It's a change of pace that could be discombobulating and humbling for someone who's in it for the money or the fame, but John 5, once again, really loves playing guitar.

"I don't look at this stuff as ego at all. I'm just so happy to play guitar, and I'm happy to play guitar in front of people. It doesn't matter if I'm in front of 500 people or 50,000. As long as I have a guitar in my hand, I'm super psyched and it's a good day."

In fact, he's pretty zen about the switch from headlining huge festival stages as a sideman to getting down into the clubs for his solo material. "When you're in a huge arena, all those little nuances aren't going to ring out so well. This sounds great," he says, launching into the chugging riff that anchors White Zombie's "Thunder Kiss '65." "But if you're like [*he begins sweep picking here*], that's gonna get lost."

To hear John 5 talk about the state of his career, it's clear that the first impression is the right one: this is a guy who just loves to play guitar. He likes chilling with his cats and posting about his family on social media. He isn't a demon; he just plays one onstage with Rob Zombie. So, given how well-adjusted he is, why is this album called *Sinner?*

"I'm a nice guy. I'm very kind and considerate to everybody, sweet to everybody. I don't want anyone to have a bad day. I just want everyone to be happy and all that stuff. But those are the ones you gotta watch out for. Those are always the scary ones — the really nice ones." GW

“Some of [The Atlas Underground Fire] was recorded with that guitar of mine that looks like an SG, but it’s not — it’s a $50 Kay, my first guitar,” Tom Morello says

SENDING UP A FLARE

Sedulous tone maverick

T|O|M M|O|R|E|L|L|O

explains how simply recording big, hairy, gnarly guitar riffs into his iPhone became his "life raft for sanity," getting him out of his bunker, forging new connections and birthing a creative oasis amid the chaos

TOM MORELLO HAD BIG PLANS FOR 2020 — first and foremost, a world tour with a reunited Rage Against the Machine that would've seen him rocking stages from Pittsburgh to Prague, Kansas City to Krakow. Instead, like all of us, he was stuck at home. "Pretty frankly, it was a time of great anxiety and depression," Morello admits to *Guitar World*.

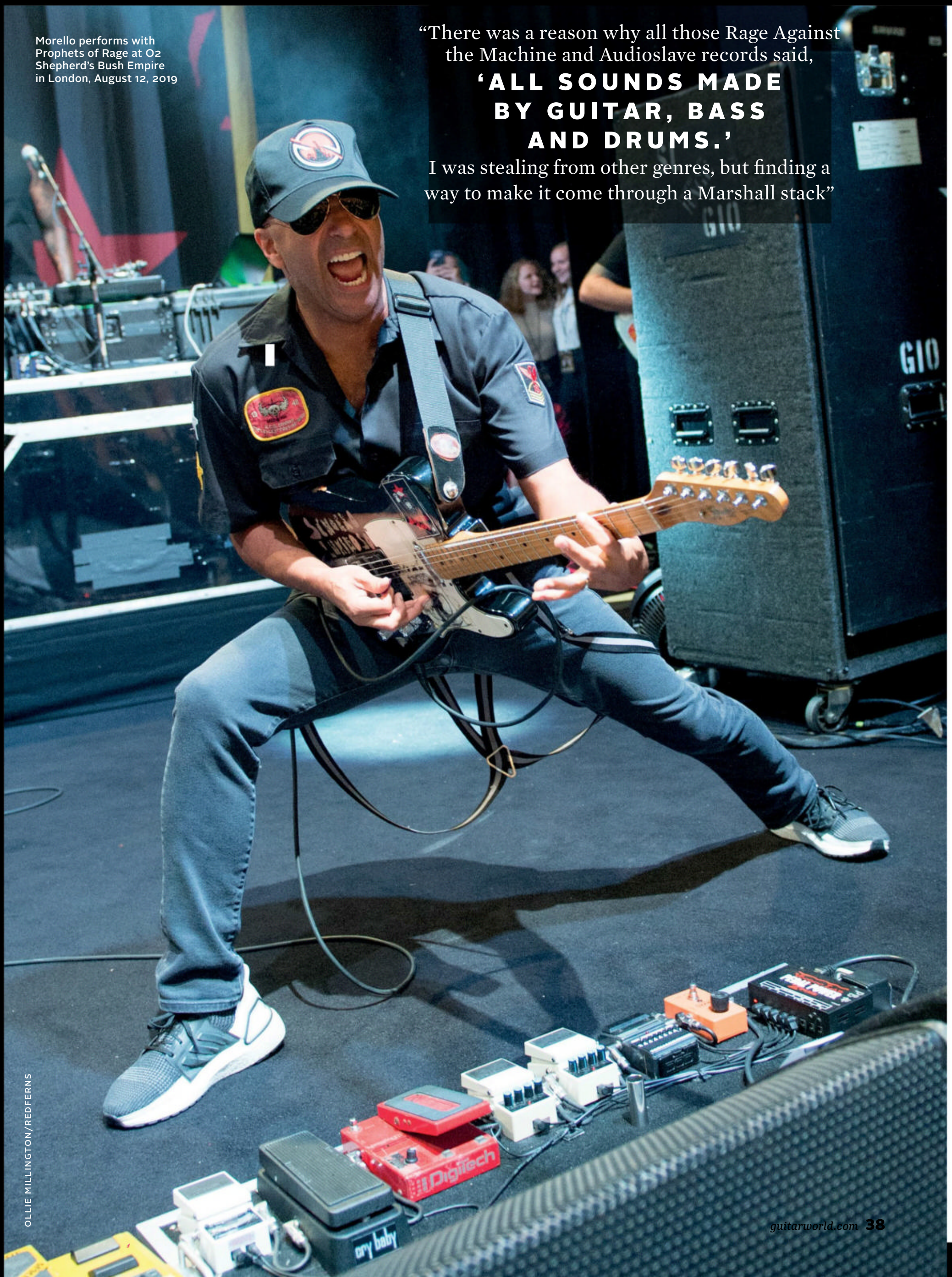
But then something shocking happened. "Weirdly," he continues, "inspiration came... from Kanye West."

Let us state for the record that, no, Morello has not collaborated with the hip-hop icon. Rather, he found encouragement in something West had said in an interview. "He was talking about how he recorded the vocals to a couple of his big hit records on the voice memo of his phone," Morello recalls. "And I thought to myself, well, I have a voice memo on *my* phone. Can I just record guitar riffs that way? So I did." Those riffs, he continues, "sounded kind of great, so I started sending them out to various engineers and producers around the world. And that was the genesis for *The Atlas Underground Fire*."

The follow-up to Morello's 2018 solo effort, *The Atlas Underground*, the new *The Atlas Underground Fire* is built on a similar foundation, with Morello collaborating with a variety of musicians in a wide range of genres, from rock (Bruce Springsteen and Eddie Vedder on a cover of AC/DC's "Highway to Hell"), metal (Bring Me the Horizon on "Let's Get the Party Started") and country (Chris Stapleton on "The War Inside") to punk (the Refused's Dennis Lyxzén on "Save Our Souls"), alternative (Grandson on "Hold the Line") and reggae (Damian Marley on "The Achilles List"). "It was sort of a free-for-all creative process," Morello says. "The Atlas Underground project allows me to go well outside my safety zone."

That's particularly evident in Morello's deep exploration of electronic music — the new record features a slew of artists that inhabit various corners of the EDM world, including Mike Posner, Phantogram, Protohype and Sama' Abdulhadi — which he says is foundational to the Atlas Underground spirit.

WORDS BY RICHARD BIENSTOCK | PHOTO BY TRAVIS SHINN



Morello performs with Prophets of Rage at O2 Shepherd's Bush Empire in London, August 12, 2019

"There was a reason why all those Rage Against the Machine and Audioslave records said,

'ALL SOUNDS MADE BY GUITAR, BASS AND DRUMS.'

I was stealing from other genres, but finding a way to make it come through a Marshall stack"

OLLIE MILLINGTON/REDFERNS

"What I've tried to do is create this alloy between two worlds. It's a cyborg — you don't know where the guitar ends and the EDM begins. To me, that feels like an exciting future for the electric guitar."

As for what *The Atlas Underground Fire* offered Morello in the present? "It allowed me to get out of the bunker," he says. "It was a way to create connections and find a musical community in a time of absolute isolation. Really, it was a life raft for sanity."

Is *The Atlas Underground Fire* a record that would have been made had it not been for the pandemic?

Heavens no. This is a record that was born of lockdown. From the time I was 17 years old to the time that the world shut down in March of 2020, I've had a nonstop creative motor on me of writing, recording and performing. And it all came to a screeching halt. For the first four months or so I was absolutely adrift. You know, I have a nice studio in my house, but I don't know how to work it. Like, I don't know how to move any of the buttons around. So I was like, "I'm not going to be able to play shows. I'm not going to be able to record music." But then I was reading an interview where Kanye West said he recorded the vocals to a couple of his big hit records using the voice memo on his phone. So I did that.

I'm imagining you seated in front of a big mixing desk, surrounded by gear in your fully stocked studio... with a little phone propped up on the console for you to record into.

[*Laughs*] Yeah. On a little folding chair. My laptop's open so I can have, like, the BPMs in my ears or whatever, and the phone is balanced on the edge of the laptop on a chair facing the amp. But you know, there's no manual that says, like, "The voice memo of your iPhone needs to be 8.4 inches away from the top left speaker..." I just set it up on a chair. And I've gotta tell you, the guitar sounded pretty freaking great. And a couple months in I did get a little mic to put on the actual phone. One of the guys that I work with was finally like, "Dude, we've gotta help you out in some way!"

How did working in this way influence the record?

It really affected the way I play and write. Because this is, what? My 21st studio album? And probably 20 of those records were made with four or five people in a room. I couldn't do that this time. So necessity being the mother of invention, the process wasn't, "Hey, let's jam, let's get a vibe in the room and see how it's going." It was "Here's the four biggest, hairiest, gnarliest riffs that I came up with today. Who should I send those to?" And maybe I'd send those to Bring Me the Horizon. And then the next day maybe it was, "I've got an idea for the solo for 'Highway to Hell.' I'll send that to Bruce Springsteen." Every day was kind of this creative oasis in the middle of all the chaos.

So you weren't necessarily writing with specific collaborators in mind.

No. It was really just a free-for-all creative process. For example, the song that starts the record, "Harlem Hellfighter," I had four or five big-ass riffs that were low-hanging fruit on that particular day. And so I sent them to Jon Levine, who's a producer friend of mine that I've always wanted to work with. I said, "What do you think of these?" And he's like, "I'll get to work." And he sent me back a track that I could play over. Then the next day I had a few riffs that Bring Me the Horizon responded to, and that song was recorded on three continents — South America, Europe and North America. We just sent tracks back and forth. Actually, a number of the songs had very sort of extraordinary recording circumstances. Mike Posner, on "Naraka" — which is the Hindu word for "hell" — from the time we began working on the song until to the time we finished it, he summited Mount Everest. Some of those vocals were recorded at 25,000 feet.

I recently read an article about climbers who attempt to summit Mount Everest. They don't always make it back.

They don't all survive. You pass the bodies going up and down. It's pretty crazy.

Mike Posner is one of several "non-rock" artists on *The Atlas Underground Fire*. What excites you about bringing the electric guitar into these other sonic realms?

I firmly believe that the electric guitar is the greatest instrument to ever be invented by mankind. There is no instrument with more power and nuance. There's nothing like the electric guitar — you can go anywhere with it, from a gorgeous Segovia classical piece to, you know, Sepultura destroying a stadium somewhere. But I think the electric guitar has a future, not just a past. And so working with artists who push me beyond what I've been comfortable doing before is very important to me. I always want to anchor the thing with the Sabbath/Zeppelin/Deep Purple riffs that are my bread and butter, but I never want to be stagnant. I always want to challenge myself and try to play stuff that I never imagined.

That seems to be an ongoing theme throughout your career.

Well, there've been countless times when people have counted the electric guitar-slash-rock-'n'-roll out, you know? And one of those times was when people were like, "You can sample electric guitar, so you don't need a guitar player anymore. A DJ can do that." So I said, "Well, *I'm* going to be the DJ, only with a Marshall stack and my bare hands." Then when electronica came along there were all these acts like the Crystal Method and the Prodigy that were great rock 'n' roll bands that didn't necessarily have guitar in them. And I would approximate the sounds and the textures of that vibe, only, again, using my guitar and my bare hands. There was a reason why all those Rage Against the Machine and Audioslave records said, "All sounds made by guitar, bass and drums." Because I was literally stealing from other genres, but finding a way to make it come through a Marshall stack.

Looking at the more traditional rock aspects of *The Atlas Underground Fire*, you bring in Bruce Springsteen and Eddie Vedder to duet on a cover of AC/DC's "Highway to Hell." What's the backstory there?

Well, Bruce and Eddie and I have a history with "Highway to Hell." When I was playing with the E Street Band in 2014, we were in Perth, Australia, the home of Bon Scott, and I wanted to pay my respects at his grave. So I'm wandering around this Perth-ian graveyard at, like, 11:30 at night, and I'm unable to find it. I'm out there for about an hour, and then out in the distance comes this motorbike, like this little light in the cemetery. And this dude rides up — a heavy-set dude with a German WWII motorcycle helmet on and a T-shirt that reads "I don't give a shit, but if I did, you're the one I'd give it to." I'm like, "This guy is going to know where Bon Scott's grave is!"

Did he?

Sure enough, he did. So he shows me, I pay my respects, and I go back to the hotel. And when I get there I see Bruce in the bar. And I'm like, "Bruce, since we're here in Australia, do you think there's any way that the circle of the E Street Band and the circle of AC/DC might overlap?" And he goes, "I never really thought about that before, but I'll think about it now." And over the course of the next few days, we started rehearsing "Highway to Hell" at soundcheck. Then we were playing this huge soccer stadium in Melbourne, and Eddie Vedder happened to be at the show because he was on a solo tour at the time. And I had an idea. I knock on Bruce's door and I say, "We are in Australia, the land where AC/DC is king. What if we open the show with 'Highway to Hell' with Eddie Vedder?" And he was like, "That sounds like a good idea!" And we did. And if you think you've seen an audience go nuts? You haven't — unless you were there on that night. It was crazy.

So when I was making this record with a lot of great young artists on it — Phantogram, Grandson, Mike Posner, Protohype, Phem — I knew I wanted a song with my rock brothers on it. And I reflected back to that night and the transcendent apex moment of rock

Bruce Springsteen [*left*] and Morello on stage in Sydney, Australia, March 18, 2013

power that that felt like. I put the track together, sent it to Bruce. He sang two takes, and then I sent that to Eddie. And that's how it came together.

What gear did you use on the record?

Well, the advantage of being kind of trapped in my studio was that I would just go in there and pick up a guitar to be the flavor of the day. Some of the music was recorded on the "Arm the Homeless" guitar. Some of it was recorded with that guitar of mine that looks like an SG, but it's not — it's a $50 Kay, my first guitar. I used my Audioslave-era Les Paul that I burned the Budweiser logo off of, the Soul Power [*Stratocaster*] guitar, the "Sendero Luminoso" Telecaster, the Jimmy Page [*Gibson EDS-1275*] double-neck... There was a complete freedom in the recording of the ideas on whatever day. It was just like, "I'm here alone, what guitar do I want to play? I've got 90 minutes until the grandmas and kids start screaming, so let's get in as much rock 'n' roll as I can!"

How about amps?

Pretty much just my regular Marshall half stack, the [*JCM800*] 2205. That's where the folding chair was — in front of that amp — so that's where I rested my phone, and that became the setup. As far as effects, a big part of the record was done with one of those little [*Electro-Harmonix*] POG pedals. It allows you to kind of sound like two guitars and a distorted bass all at once, and so I relied on that pretty heavily. I also had the [*Way Huge*] Swollen Pickle, and then the Space Station, which DigiTech made in 1994 or something, trying to copy all my sounds and jam it into one shitty pedal. [*Laughs*] I still use that one.

Although you were more or less using your traditional gear, do you feel the tones came out differently due to the fact that they were being recorded through your phone?

It is a little bit different. But it is what it is. And there's something very liberating about that. I've always been about embracing limitations, and this was a pretty significant limitation. Not sonically, because the guitars from beginning to end sound pretty great, and they do it sometimes in different and unexpected ways, which I think is healthy. But the way I had to create changed the way I created. Normally if I'm doing a guitar solo I'll record a bunch of takes and listen back to them, and maybe there's some piecing together of this part and that part. But this time I would just blow into the phone and go, "Let's call that one 'Wednesday.' " Like, the "Highway to Hell" solo? That was a Wednesday, man. It was great to be able to let go like that and let the chips fall where they may. It felt like there was a lot of very intuitive playing on this record, and there were a lot of riffs that went in different directions than they would have had I spent a lot of time overthinking things.

Not only were you attempting to reevaluate the role of the guitar in popular music, but also how, as a rock guitar player, you can create with and record the instrument in the studio.

Oh, absolutely. I mean, the first cornerstone of my playing is unapologetically and uncompromisingly big rock 'n' roll, and I will never budge an inch on that. That's what I get off on the most, going back to the first AC/DC and Kiss and Led Zeppelin posters on my wall. That just feels right and feels like home. At the same time, the other cornerstone of my playing has been to just disregard anything that has to do with tradition, whether it's melody or tone or sound, or even what part of the guitar to look at as a sound-maker.

You hear that on *The Atlas Underground Fire*.

That's been the common thread through everything, whether it's an Atlas Underground record or an Audioslave record. I need to feel a jam move air, but I also want it to challenge me. Vernon Reid called it the "What the fuck" factor, you know? Like, when you put on a record and you hear what must be a guitar but can't possibly be a guitar, you're like, "What the fuck?" I remember thinking about that over and over again as a young person, and as a young guitar player. Every record I make, I try to have as many What the fuck? factors as possible. GW

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Black Veil Brides' Jinxx (left) and Jake Pitts

Steve Howe performs with Yes in Hollywood during the band's 50th-anniversary tour in June 2019; Howe is playing his Gibson ES-175

SCOTT DUDELSON/GETTY IMAGES

ONWARDS

STALWART **YES** GUITARIST **STEVE HOWE** ON THE INSPIRATION, TONES AND SENTIMENT BEHIND *THE QUEST*, THE PROG-ROCK MASTERS' FIRST STUDIO ALBUM SINCE THE PASSING OF FOUNDING BASSIST **CHRIS SQUIRE**

IN AND OF itself, Yes' new album, *The Quest*, is significant as it ends one of the longest gaps between studio recordings for the progressive-rock legends (the last time they released a studio effort was in 2014, with *Heaven & Earth*). Guitarist Steve Howe acknowledges the fact that the band's fans have been clamoring for new music, but he also defends the decision to hold off and not hurry.

"I'm not the guy who will say, 'Let's rush and make another record,' because I've had my fingers rapped too many times with the outcome of that," he says. "I've been disappointed with some of the recent albums Yes recorded, starting with [*1997's*] *Open Your Eyes*. I mean, they all had their merits, but I think to make a really good album, you need the proper circumstances and atmosphere. Everybody has to feel really ready. So as far as the long gap, all I can say is, some things are worth waiting for, and I think this album is worth the wait."

The Quest is notable in other ways. Not only is it the first Yes album on which founding bassist Chris Squire doesn't appear (he passed away in 2015), but it's also the first record to feature a lineup devoid of any original band members. Howe and drummer Alan White are now the two elder statesmen [*Howe replaced Peter Banks in 1970; White replaced*

BY JOE BOSSO PHOTO BY SCOTT DUDELSON

Bill Buford in 1972] in a group that consists of singer Jon Davison, bassist Billy Sherwood and keyboardist Geoff Downes.

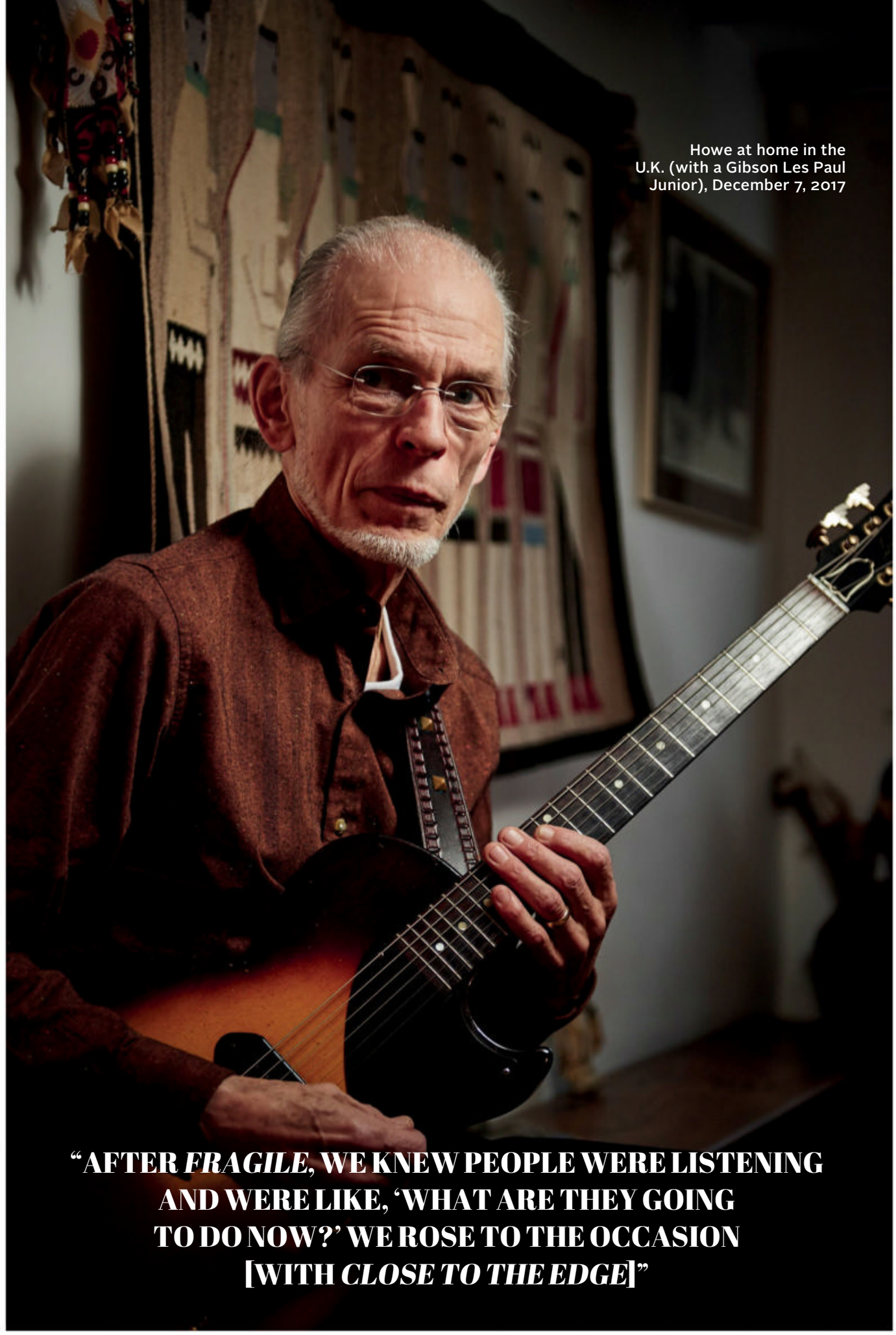
"It's certainly a different dynamic in the band these days," Howe says. "In terms of Chris Squire, we obviously felt the loss, and we know the scale of what losing him means. But what we're trying to do is not wallow in regret. When we tour, we pay tribute to Chris by playing his song 'Onward' and showing pictures of him. The legacy of what he left us is immense."

The guitarist is effusive in singing the praises of Sherwood, who began an on-and-off association with Yes back in 1989 and continued through various incarnations of the group (including spin-off projects), sometimes serving as additional guitarist and keyboardist before assuming full-time bass duties following Squire's passing. "Billy's really done an amazing job," Howe says. "As most people know, he was one of the biggest Chris Squire fans in the world. The two of them worked together in Yes and in other things for a long time, so if anybody was equipped to step into this role, it's definitely Billy. Losing Chris left us in a difficult position, but Billy stepped up to the game. I can't say enough about him."

Clocking in at just over 60 minutes, *The Quest* is a sprawling work that recalls the sound of classic Yes — there's heaping doses of Hammond organ and spiraling vocals — done up in a starkly modern and sometimes edgy way. It's grand without seeming pompous, reverential without being dreary. Even when the band employs a full orchestra on the sumptuous ballad "Minus the Man" or the progressive-rock thriller "Dare to Know," there's not a whiff of pretension — it's theatrical, not showy. Throughout the album, but especially on the widescreen epic "The Ice Bridge" and the surprisingly soulful "Leave Well Alone," Howe is a dominant presence, spinning webs of cleanly articulated riffs and solos that touch on jazz, blues, rockabilly and even twang. On one of the record's delightful highlights, "Mystery Tour," an unabashed tribute to the Fab Four, he manages to capture George Harrison's distinctive soloing style — there's a sweet warble to the sound — with his own fleet-fingered approach.

In yet another first, Howe took on the role as sole producer, which he says isn't really a big deal ("I've always been part of the production team"), only this album presented him with an unexpected challenge as it was recorded during the time of COVID. Because of travel and safety restrictions, various band members were sometimes together in studios in America and the U.K., but other times recording was done remotely.

None of which fazed Howe at all. "As a producer, my biggest role, beyond certain decisions that I had to make, was in setting a proper atmosphere, and that only comes through one's communication skills," he says. "If I can steer people's performances in a good way and answer their questions, that's half the job right there. As for file-sharing, that's been around for over 10 years, so there was no strangeness to that aspect at all. It's been perfected to a degree that there's no loss of audio. If you can communicate to somebody what you're looking for, you can work with them wherever they are, and in a way they can have even more freedom. It's not a bad way to work."



Howe at home in the U.K. (with a Gibson Les Paul Junior), December 7, 2017

"AFTER *FRAGILE*, WE KNEW PEOPLE WERE LISTENING AND WERE LIKE, 'WHAT ARE THEY GOING TO DO NOW?' WE ROSE TO THE OCCASION [WITH *CLOSE TO THE EDGE*]"

In previous interviews, you've talked about your influences as a guitarist, but you have to know that you've had an impact on so many

JOSEPH BRANSTON/FUTURE

players over the years. Do you ever hear from some of them?

Oh, absolutely. It's delightful to hear from people who are inspired by me, because really, they're inspired by what I picked up from my heroes. It's like we're carrying on messages. I always appreciate the compliments and recognition. I can tell you that Chris Squire was very unhappy that we didn't get into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame during his lifetime. He'd be pleased that we got it, but obviously he'd be sad that he didn't get it, because he didn't feel that Yes got the proper kind of acknowledgement from the business. He thought the industry turned its back on us a bit.

The band's performance at the Rock Hall induction was one of those things where past and present members took part. What was that like for you?

It was strange, to say the least. It was like there were two sets of dialogue — one being that it would be nice if we all could have gone on and made music together. But the other thing was, there were issues, and some people had bigger ones than others. The lineup that had been given the green light by the Hall of Fame was just a moment in time. I knew there would be challenges, but you have to rise to them. I had to perform, and that's what I did. "Roundabout" worked out not being too bad, really. I don't own "Owner of a Lonely Heart." We don't play it — it's the Eighties band's song. So for that performance, I learned Chris' bass parts note for note, and I enjoyed, you know, "doing Chris." I respected what he did, and that's it. All in all, not a performance I would put in my top 10.

You're at the point in your career where each year is bound to bring up an anniversary. And as we approach 2022, we mark the 50-year mark of *Close to the Edge*, which routinely tops lists as the "greatest prog album of all time." Where do you rank it?

Oh, I place it right at the top, actually. When we started that album, there was such a feeling of ignition within the band. After *Fragile*, we knew that people were listening and were like, "What are they going to do now?" We rose to the occasion. The song "Close to the Edge" was the moment in time when everybody's contributions fired off in the highest possible way. [*Producer*] Eddy Offord, too. The other tracks were, too — they were identically identifiable and well arranged. The arrangement skills of Yes were coming through with *Close to the Edge*. I remember listening back to it in the studio and saying, "That's pretty all right."

Some of the reviews for the album at the time were pretty remarkable. NME actually said, "Yes aren't just close to the edge, they've gone right over it."

That's right. We were definitely feeling more confident, and that started with *The Yes Album* and into *Fragile*. We could do bigger tracks with longer intros, do more noodling, stopping and restarting. Everything was going "out there" and we had some tricky arrangements. I mean, we were basically a rock band that fluffed it out a lot.

Bill [Bruford] was the guy who said, "I'll never play 4/4," and we didn't expect him to. That's what everybody was doing — finding their own voices. Bill was very adventurous, as evidenced by his decision to go and join King Crimson after *Close to the Edge*. He followed his heart. I'm not quoting him, but I think he thought Yes had gotten as commercial as he wanted us to be. It was so catastrophic when Bill said he was leaving. It sort of made no sense, but to him it did. I respected his view.

How exactly did Alan White come into the picture?

We were all hanging out with him in the studio before Bill left. Alan was a mate of Eddy's, and we got to know him. We had a few "hangout" guys. So when Bill told us the shocking news that he was leaving, there was silence, but then we all thought, "Well, Alan is a drummer, a really good drummer, in fact. We'll go with him, right?" We were in a jam, and Bill's decision put pressure on us to replace him quickly.

We got Alan in and played with him. He had to learn the whole set in four days or something. We had two rehearsals, and he bluffed his way through it. [*Laughs*] But if you're a good musician, that's what you've been taught to do. Nobody had really heard *Close to the Edge* yet, so there wasn't anything to compare him to. Alan knew he didn't play like Bill, but he rose to the occasion. There was a change in the band, but I guess it's like when I came in and there was that change.

You and Alan are now the longest-standing members of Yes. Is it fair to assume the two of you pretty much call the shots?

Yeah, we have a strength of opinion based on our experience, and we can bring light to the dark tunnel sometimes by saying we've been through all these things before. I'm sure Alan and I have voices that are going to be listened to. But this is a team. This does rely immensely on teamwork, and pretty much things have to run through people, and they have to agree irrespective of their period in the band.

There was that period in which Jon Anderson, Trevor Rabin and Rick Wakeman toured together. You and Alan didn't take part in that. Was that a contentious time?

Probably. That was just a futile thing they did. When they came out with the idea for it, I actually sent three emails to each of them saying, "Good luck," like, "It's not going anywhere." But that was just true sentiment. I said to them, "Great. You've put a band together. Go with it. Good luck." I never heard back from them, but basically that was fine. They had their run. There has to be some competition in life, and they appeared to be what might be called competition.

Basically, in their second year they decided to tack Yes on the front, and some promoters used the Yes logo, which they weren't allowed to do. There was a bit of a pickle, but fortunately people woke up and said, "OK, we won't do that." It was a bit of a difficult time, because it was confusing, not only for the audience, but also for promoters. "Is this Yes, or is it Yes with ARW?" It was a bit of a mess for a long time.

Being in your position, is it like an extended family at reunions sometimes? You have to make peace with one another, and at times it's difficult.

It's not difficult in certain situations. Some situations are really good, provided one keeps the same perspective and viewpoint that are most helpful to everybody going forward. Basically, you try not to jam things up. Whenever you leave a band, you might stay in touch with somebody, or you might not. The latter says something, in a way: "Look, I've done that, and we can't really connect so much anymore." It happens.

Sometimes you stay in touch with people that you don't work with anymore. I never stopped being friendly with Bill, but we're not working together. That's ideal. It's quite mature to accept something. If you can't accept a situation, you keep rattling the cage and all you're going to do is make yourself unhappy — and other people.

Let's get into some of the new songs. "Dare to Know" features such beautifully languid guitar melody lines at the top, and the volume swells you do are gorgeous.

Thank you. Yeah, it was one in which I got more ambitious as I went. There's several different frameworks to the tune, and of course, the orchestra comes in near the middle. The volume swells... it's a Les Paul Junior and a pedal. I'm doing this drone without any harmonies. It's a thick sound that I enjoy playing with. There's the long intro. I'm mad about intros and endings. I'm the guy who always says, "Love the song, but it can't start like this, and it can't end like that." So it's a song where I said, "Look, it just can't possibly start like this. Love it, but it's got to start like *this*." So I keep trying to stimulate other people to come up with more things.

"Leave Well Alone" has such a soulful rhythm — it's almost R&B. Not what people normally associate with Yes.

Well, I'm glad you hear that. Like I said, Yes is a rock band. We should try to use all facets of different mediums of rock to tell our story.

“CHRIS SQUIRE DIDN’T FEEL THAT YES GOT THE PROPER KIND OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FROM THE BUSINESS. HE THOUGHT THE INDUSTRY TURNED ITS BACK ON US A BIT”

Yes’ current lineup; [*from left*] Billy Sherwood, Jon Davison, Steve Howe, Alan White and Geoff Downes

The outro is signature Steve Howe, a stunning tapestry of clean guitar lines. Did you demo that? Was that improv?

That was complete improv, and it’s pretty much what I played. I had a few takes, but that’s the take I like. Basically, I just started dabbling around with chords. I find different ways of leaning on them and crossing over them. I really enjoy guitar breaks, and that one is quite long. I sort of drifted out with it and made it reach a climax while other things were happening in the arrangement. The drums picked up and went to double time. All those things were very calculated, but they’re also improvised.

On “Music to My Ears,” you and Jon Davison do a vocal duet. People forget what a strong singer you are.

Well, thanks. Overall, I haven’t had many compliments about my singing. I do enjoy singing, and when you’re doing it with somebody else, you have to have the right sense of harmony. There are a few tracks on the album with duet vocals. On some occasions, Jon would say, “I could just sing what you’re singing, but what about us both doing it?” That’s quite unique for Yes, but it goes back to Asia, with John Wetton and me singing.

Your guitar playing dots the entire track, but it never seems intrusive. Do you ever have to pull back, like, “Okay, that’s too much. Stay in the pocket”?

That might happen as I’m finding my feet. Sometimes I’ll play something and it’s over the top, so I’ll pull it back. There’s a certain kind of order and sensibility I like to bring to my guitar. One of the great skills of being any musician is being able to accompany a singer. It’s a big part of rock music. Beyond the moments when you get to do whatever the hell you like, it’s important to find out what you should do to support the singing. There are even times when you don’t need the guitar.

A lot of people do Beatles tributes, but a lot of them are kind of cheesy. “Mystery Tour” is whimsical, but it’s not gooey or tacky.

Oh, good. Thanks. I wrote about half the lyrics in 1985, and a year or so ago I found them and thought, “There’s kind of something here.” Then I looked at my voice recorder and picked out the last tune I wrote, so that’s what I used. The song doesn’t quite sound like the Beatles, but it is a tribute to their greatness. I think they’re the best band that ever existed. They introduced such a broad spectrum of music in ways that hadn’t been allowed before.

It’s interesting how in the solo you channel a bit of George Harrison’s sound and spirit, but you dovetail it with your own style.

At first I wasn’t trying to do that. I’m not one to copy other people, but I thought, “I’m playing a Telecaster,” and if you remember during the *Let It Be* period, George was big on Telecasters. The solo’s got a few bends. It’s very casual and relaxed, like the whole song. I like that break a lot.

Which Telecaster did you use?

It’s my ’55 *Relayer* guitar. The pickup combination on that one is great.

You always use your Gibson ES-175, and you mentioned a Les Paul Junior. What other guitars did you play on the record?

I used the Les Paul Roland all the time. There’s plenty of reasons why I like this guitar, mainly because it isn’t heavy, so that’s unique. I played it at a trade show and said, “I’ve got to have this.” I had Customs and an old Les Paul that weighed a ton, so this guitar felt quite nice. It became a workhorse, much like the Les Paul Junior. It’s nicely set up and has a Tune-O-Matic tailpiece. I love it.

There are other guitars besides those. I used a Gibson ES-345, and of course, the ES-175. There’s steel guitar, which is a Fender Stringmaster. I love that. There’s some Stratocaster, and on “The Living Island” I played a Martin MC-28 acoustic. I played sitar and mandolin, and there’s a Portuguese guitar that got a spotlight. Quite a few guitars — they all seem to come out.

Does having so many guitars at your fingertips ever feel like you have too many options?

Not really, although I will say that I do like fewer choices in some respects. My collection is still too big. Gradually I’m whittling back, because I know there are key guitars that I must have for their sound. Danelectros, Rickenbackers and other things pop in the scene a little bit, but mainly, you can’t go wrong with Gibson and Fender. GW

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Mastodon [*from left*]:
Bill Kelliher, Troy Sanders,
Brann Dailor and Brent Hinds

THE GREAT ESCAPE

Stylistically divergent — yet undoubtedly compatible — Mastodon guitarists **BRENT HINDS** & **BILL KELLIHER** unravel ***Hushed and Grim,*** the band's first double album

Words by **Jon Wiederhorn**
Photo by **Clay Patrick McBride**

"I HATE THINKING ABOUT THE HORRIBLE THINGS GOING ON IN THE WORLD, AND I HATE KNOWING THAT THEY'RE GOING ON. WE'VE CREATED ANOTHER SPACE AS AN ESCAPE FOR OURSELVES – AND OUR FANS"

– Brent Hinds

Mastodon's Hinds and Kelliher on stage in Austin, October 28, 2015. Hinds is playing his signature V model by Electrical Guitar Company; Kelliher has a Gibson Explorer

OVER THE LAST

21-plus years, Mastodon have established themselves as one of the best post-2000 progressive, psychedelic metal bands. Born with an equal love of Melvins, Metallica, Rush and Neurosis, the Atlanta-based quartet have blown minds with their bleak, angular rhythms, abrupt tempo changes, meandering atmospherics and psychotronic imagery. And, like the best prog-rockers, Mastodon have crafted multifaceted concept albums that have journeyed through haunting fantasy and sci-fi scenes. They based 2004's *Leviathan* on Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. Two years later, *Blood Mountain* addressed the plight of a man stranded in a mountain range inhabited by terrifying creatures. In 2009, they wrote *Crack the Skye* about the cosmic visions of a comatose mind-traveler. And in 2017 they crafted *Emperor of Sand* around the story of a doomed man fleeing a death sentence in the scorching desert.

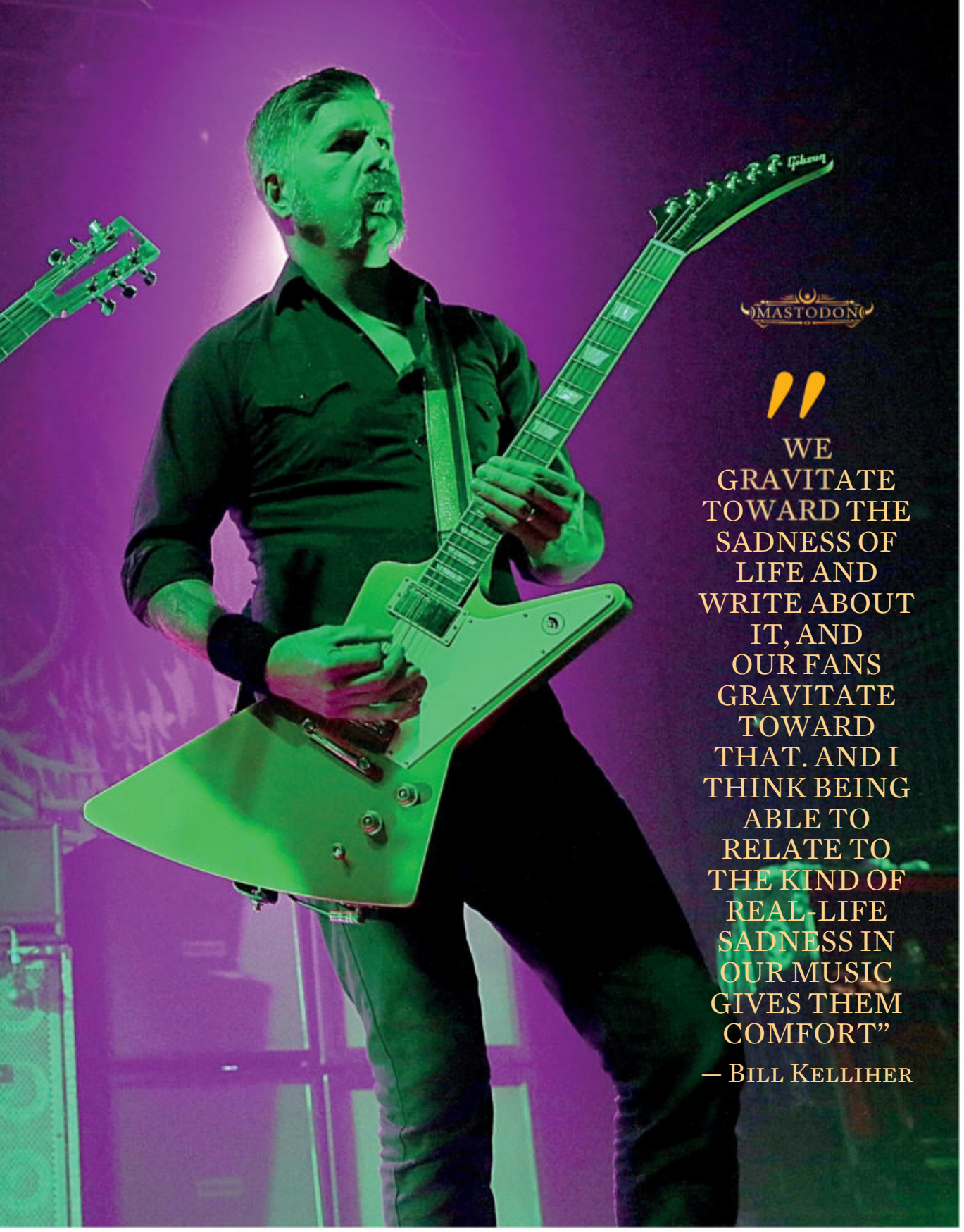
"When I do music, I do this thing to escape — pull a Houdini on myself and try not to think about things that are negative as fuck," says lead guitarist and vocalist Brent Hinds, from behind the wheel of a car he's driving to the airport to pick up his girlfriend. "I hate thinking about the horrible things that are going on in the world, and I hate knowing that they're going on. So we've just created another space as an escape for ourselves and our fans."

On one level, that's true. Mastodon's music is complex and challenging, meandering through an escapist realm of sludgy riffs and atmospheric passages. The band's eighth studio release, *Hushed and Grim*, Mastodon's first double album, is both otherwordly and visceral. It's also the group's most musically diverse release to date. There are tumbling, trenchant metal cuts ("Pain with an Anchor"), expansive blues-embellished epics ("The Beast"), tribal and haunting soundscapes ("Dagger"), bereaved keyboard-laden songs ("Skeleton of Splendor") and angsty, poppy numbers ("Teardrinker").

Yet, as much of a sonic journey as the band's albums have been, Mastodon's music has frequently stemmed from pain, helplessness and loss. *Crack the Skye* surfaced from mental images Hinds had after an assault in 2007 that left him in a coma and close to death; the record also addressed the tragic overdose of drummer Brann Dailor's sister Skye. The title track of 2011's *The Hunter* is an homage to Hinds' brother, Brad, who died of a heart attack in 2010 while hunting. Mastodon's 2017 record *Emperor of Sand* confronted the hopelessness and fear of mortality that was driven home after bassist and vocalist Troy Sanders' wife was stricken with cancer (she has been in remission for years) and guitarist Bill Kelliher's mother died of the disease. Tragically, the time Kelliher spent writing *Hushed and Grim* was also filled with misfortune and pain. Between the time the band finished *Emperor of Sand* and started working on the new album, their longtime manager Nick John died of pancreatic cancer, tour manager Bob Dallas passed away from an undisclosed illness and Kelliher's wife was stricken with a rare disease (amyloidosis) and had to undergo intensive treatment.

"I've realized that everything we do is from the heart, and a lot of it all stems from real pain and emotion from the death of loved ones and the sickness of friends and family, Kelliher says. "For some reason, we've been pulling our best stuff out of the most depressing emotional wreckage that happens in everyone's lives. But I feel like our fans can connect with that.

GARY MILLER/GETTY IMAGES



Everyone can connect with pain and suffering and losing someone. In a big way, Mastodon is the elephant in the room. We gravitate toward the sadness of life and write about it, and our fans gravitate toward that. And I think being able to relate to the kind of real-life sadness in our music gives them comfort."

The band's deft combination of genuine melancholy and cathartic fantasy make Mastodon's music too authentic and emotionally expressive to ever sound life self-indulgent prog-rock. Hinds and Kelliher are gifted guitarists, but neither is driven by a desire to show off. Their playing is more of an unveiling of their personalities. Hinds can be socially awkward and gets verbally tongue-tied, so he expresses himself through his multi-textural, variegated playing. And Kelliher is a chill dude who vents frustration and anger through artistic riffs and sheer volume. Though both players are unique and capable of reaching stratospheric heights, they don't play for themselves. They play for the songs, and if that means deferring to their bandmates' ideas, they have enough confidence in their musical and compositional skills to step down and let someone else shine. This is especially true for Kelliher, who has become Mastodon's primary songwriter but who often gets overlooked since he's not one of the band's three singers (Hinds, Sanders and Dailor).

"Brent's the quote-unquote lead guitarist, and he sings, so of course he gets all the attention," says Kelliher with a shrug. "And he's a wild man, which makes him, even more, the center of attention. So I mean, whatever. I don't mind standing in the back and not getting all the accolades. It's fine with me. Everyone in my band knows who does what, and I'm totally cool with my role. And I love what we do."

A few days before Mastodon's first dates to support *Hushed and Grim,* Hinds and Kelliher openly discuss the effects of writing in COVID-mandated isolation, their reservations about making a double album, the way their notably different guitar styles mesh — and the creative inspiration of suffering.

The songs on *Hushed and Grim* are eclectic and developed, ranging from rumbling and riffy to serene and almost delicate. Did you make an effort to create an album more sonically diverse than those on *Emperor of Sand*?

HINDS: Nah, man. I just like to do lots of things. I play in different bands aside from Mastodon and they're all different. I never want to repeat myself, so I wasn't thinking of that last album at all when we did this. For this record, we wrote at home because we were bored and there wasn't much going on because we were in lockdown. So you're stuck at home all the time with yourself and your thoughts. So this was more of an internal exploration for me. You look inward to the inward journey, and I would play so much guitar that it would just sweat blood and guitar all day long and I would come up with all sorts of different stuff, and it all found its place here and there.

KELLIHER: I'm always playing and writing anyway. I've got volumes of voice notes and Pro Tools sessions of me just riffing out. When we got off the *Emperor of Sand* touring cycle two years ago, I was almost welcoming COVID because it was like, "Okay, well, now we have a bunch of time off and we don't have anything on the horizon. It's time to take a well-needed rest from all the touring on the last record and write the next record." And we were well prepared. We already had skeletons for a lot of the songs. And I was totally cool with going into my studio in my basement and trying all kinds of stuff to make some new songs. So, I wrote a bunch of the new album and Troy wrote some songs, which was a first, and Brent wrote two.

Did you start writing with the intent of putting out a double album?

KELLIHER: We wrote about 25 songs, but 10 weren't completely finished. So we went in with the 15 that were closest to being done. We were going to record 12 and use 10 for the record. We planned to do a rough demo of everything and pick out which 12 were the best. But we wound up recording all 15. We've never been a double-album kind of band. We've always joked that doing a dou-

ble album is a curse, and how you don't want to do a double album or else your band is going to fall apart. But unless you progress and try things differently each time, what's the point? And I just felt like every song is fucking awesome. At one point we thought of putting 10 songs on the album and doing a five-song EP later, but the songs all sounded like they needed to be together. They were in the same vibe and they're all related, like brothers and sisters. So we just said, "No, we can just split up the family. Let's do a double album."

HINDS: I would prefer this more just to be an album instead of a double album. I would have cut some stuff out, but whatever. It is what it is. We've got all this time on our hands and Troy broke his songwriting cherry on this and wrote four really nice songs that showed a lot of growth and pushed the boundaries into a double album.

Brent, how do your songs differ from Bill's?

HINDS: A lot of times my stuff is really long. I like to sprawl out in a song. I think living in the city and being cramped around people causes these unconscious decisions for my songwriting. The only case scenario that I have to really spread out is in a song. Having the kind of sound I have, when I play and get into it, I get kinda lost, and before I know it 13 or 15 minutes have passed.

You have a rockabilly side project and you're a big fan of country music. Do you think you bring those influences into Mastodon?

HINDS: I'm not a metal guitarist. Sometimes I stumble upon a metal riff and I've been influenced by [*post metal*] bands like Isis. I get it where I can fit it, but I'm an oddball when it comes to the metal scene. I love country. My favorite country singer/songwriter is Johnny Paycheck and my favorite guitar-playing country artist is Jerry Reed. So I try to incorporate some country licks here and there. And sometimes I'm clever enough to find out where they can go in a tasteful manner. I had been working on the first riff of "Peace and Tranquility" for a while because it was a departure outside of what I normally write. I was listening to Animals As Leaders and I got inspired by them to write that first bit. And then all the other stuff fell into place after I had my medicine.

Bill, have you always been a metal player?

KELLIHER: I don't know. I grew up on a lot of punk rock, and when I'm writing songs, I usually take the punk or garage rock formula — verse, verse, chorus, verse, chorus, bridge, solo, end. I always loved the Ramones and bands that wrote a sick riff and then they'd go away from it before they'd bring it back around again. That's been my formula for a while. With this new record, I did delve into some new territory. "Sickle and Peace" has some Stanley Jordan-type guitar playing. It was almost an accident. I was playing in that style and Brann went, "What is that?" I was like, "I don't know. I'm just messing around." He said, "That sounded cool," and he started humming what I had been playing, and then I wrote it from that.

Do you and Brann frequently work on songs together?

KELLIHER: We work really well together. When he and I get together down in my studio at my house, I feel like I shine because he brings out the best riffs in me. Just like with *Emperor of Sand*, we spent a lot of time building the foundation of *Hushed and Grim*. I'd start playing something and a lot of times, if I got stuck, he'd start humming something that would go with what I did, and the two parts would fit together really well.

Can you write with the whole band or is it easier to work when it's just you and Brann?

KELLIHER: It was really hard to do that because of COVID, but it's tough when you get all four guys in the room and we try to agree on one thing. For me, the writing process is a lot easier when I get together with Brann and we just spitball ideas and say, "This is cool for now as a placeholder. Maybe we'll change something later. And then later I'll put everything under a microscope and over-analyze every riff and every part of the song and change things that need to be changed. But that's what makes it great.

Do you work on a song until it's done and then move onto the next one?

KELLIHER: I never just write one song all at once. Everything happens in pieces. I'll write a song or a riff and then another riff. And then sometimes the song has to go on the back burner for a couple months until I can come up with something that jives with what I've already done.

Did you mess around with a bunch of different gear?

KELLIHER: There were a couple main guitars that I favored a lot. I used my ESP Sparrowhawk a lot. And I used my Friedman Butterslax [*100-watt, three-channel amplifier head*] and a Marshall JCM 800. And we used old-school analog pedals. I had a Friedman BE-OD Deluxe and an MXR Sugar Drive pedal I really like.

HINDS: I just use what I got — Gibson Flying V, Les Paul, SG and my signature V. And I got Marshall JMPs and my Diezel 12-gauge [*cabinets*]. My friend let me borrow his Fifties Fender tiny 30-watt combo amps, and I played most of the guitar solos on those. We had two of them slaved together, which sounded cool. And I used some KHDK pedals, but I came out with my own pedal company, Dirty B Hinds, and I'm using the Mastodrive and all these pedals I'm designing with my friends.

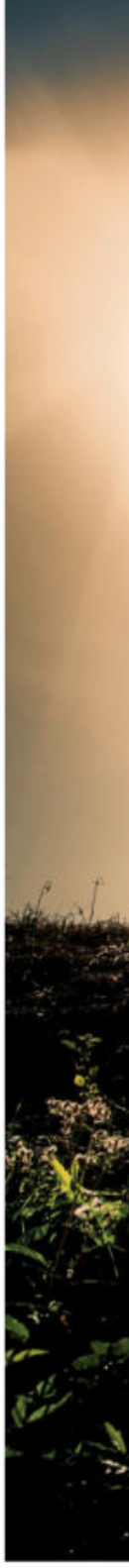
As guitarists, you two have such different playing styles, which is part of why the music sounds so innovative. Is it ever hard to figure out who should play what?

HINDS: We just play what we write. For this album, I didn't go for sheer aggression because I don't think I stumbled across too many heavy metal riffs that were really angry. Bill is the master of the metal riffs and he provides the heavy. But heavy stuff comes from the heart, and when you're all tuned down to D and are running through a fucking Marshall stack, all of a sudden everything's heavy, even though your point might be to bring on some melancholy shit or some really delicate stuff. It's all about the tonality of the instrument sometimes. So we each do our parts separately and then show them to each other 'cause we're not a jam band. We're more like choreographed acrobatics.

KELLIHER: Normally I'll write the rhythm and the harmonies 'cause I'm really into harmonies. And if it's my song, I'll write the lead and I'll tell Brent, "Hey, this is what I did for that. Can you play it?" Nine times out of 10, he's like, "Yeah, yeah." But once in a while, he'll hear something in what I'm showing him and he'll come up with his own interpretation. And sometimes he'll do something that will totally surprise me. Like, I'll put a bridge in there and I assume he'll play a solo over that. Then he'll come in the next day and play his part and when I come back in, I'm blown away when I listen back because he put the solo somewhere entirely different, like over a midsection, which I thought would be instrumental. I'll be like, "Whoa, wow! I wouldn't have put it there, but that's cool. That sounds killer." When it works, it's a very cool thing to hear because it shines a whole new ray of light on the song.

Brent, is it exciting for you to see what Bill does with your songs?

HINDS: I don't know. I mean, sometimes



JIMMY HUBBARD

Like the best prog-rockers, Mastodon have crafted multifaceted concept albums that have journeyed through haunting fantasy and sci-fi scenes

you get up on the horse and you can ride pretty well. Then other times the horse is faster and it's hard to stay there. You've just got to keep yourself in practice and keep trying to ride it until you get something you like.

KELLIHER: When Brent writes stuff — and I've told him this before — it's like he's writing as if he was the only guitar player in the band because it's just wild. So I'm trying to learn it and trying to play it over and over. I'm like, "Dude, this is really hard." He'll go, "Oh no, it's not hard. Your stuff is hard." I'm like, "Well, your stuff is hard because it's almost like you're playing a guitar solo the whole time."

Do you discuss how you can complement his unorthodox playing?

KELLIHER: It's very hard for him to teach me stuff and tell me what he's doing. He doesn't have any patience for sitting down and showing me what to do. When he plays, I have to video record his exact finger positions on my phone. And then I'll learn it. But it changes a lot, too. I'll work really hard and learn something one way and then by the next practice he's changed it, which he can do. It's his riff until we record it.

What if you can't figure out what he's doing?

KELLIHER: That happens a lot. There's a song on [*2006's*] *Blood Mountain* called "Capillarian Crest," and when it gets to the midsection he's playing completely crazy stuff. I was like, "Yeah, I'm not even going to try to play that because I'm going to give myself an aneurysm if I try to learn it. And then I got to the point where he was doing something really complicated and I went, "Okay, I'm never going to play something exactly like you because we're different kinds of guitar players." So we play the same parts in different ways. I'll try to lock into what he's doing and do something underneath it that makes the part more interesting. That usually works out well.

Your longtime manager — and your tour manager — died between the release of *Emperor of Sand* and the completion of *Hushed and Grim*. And Bill, you said your wife was diagnosed with a rare disease. Mastodon have been through so much loss and pain over the years. Does the music help you get through it?

KELLIHER: When I'm writing songs, I'm thinking about those people and dredging up the emotions I feel from missing them. That comes from a real place, and people know that and they can feel that and connect to it. I recently got a message from a guy who said, "I lost my wife to cancer two years ago. She loved your music, and thank you for all that you do and for your music." It's fucking sad, but we're a real band and we write songs about real subject matter. And it seems like every record gets deeper into that world.

You visit that world, for sure, but the music seems like it takes the listener to another place that's almost otherworldly and majestic, so the melancholy that's in

the music and the messages about mortality resound in an epic way.

KELLIHER: I agree, and I just feel that with every year that passes and the more writing that we do, the better we get at it and the more we're able to show that range of emotion. And now we can go from this crazy riff into the super-sad riff, or an evil, evil riff and it all works. That's a natural evolution that comes from being together so long. It's funny because there are fans out there that go, "Oh, [*2002's*] *Remission* is your best album," and I'm like, "Oh, okay. I'm glad you like it, but I was just learning how to write a song back then. We were just spitballing. Now, we know what we're doing. I'll try a riff and right away I'll know, "Nah, it doesn't work for us. That's why Brann and I write so much together because we can actually spitball with each other and go somewhere without spinning our wheels."

HINDS: It's not just sadness. I mean, there's hurt and anger that have afflicted us through our lives. And the only way we can deal with it is to have these songs that go out to our fallen brothers and sisters and are dedicated to our friendship with the people that aren't lucky enough to still be here with us. But, for me, I think there's a lot of anxiety in there, too. I feel like the road is dangerous and home is not, but we usually have to tour all the time. I used to have constant anxiety about getting in a bus accident or a plane crash. And then big crowds of people give me anxiety. So I've lived with anxiety for 20 years and I was hooked on [the anxiety Benzodiazepine] Xanax for 15 years and I had to wean myself off of it a little bit at a time 'cause it was compromising my breathing. Of course, I was partying on it and it's really bad to do that. I was never prescribed things so I was buying from people on the streets all the time. One time I couldn't get it and I had two seizures. So, I finally weaned myself off. It took years, but recently I discovered that you need to be anxious and fucking deal with it and that keeps you on your toes and motivated to keep doing shit. Now I try to feed off the anxiety and play guitar.

Bill, Can you talk about what happened with your wife, who is in remission from her condition?

KELLIHER: It was crazy. She was getting tired all the time and her heart was beating out of control. Then, in the middle of the night she wakes me up and she goes, "I think I'm having a heart attack." She was going into AFib (Atrial Fibrillation) [which often causes palpitations, shortness of breath and fatigue]. We took her to the emergency room. The doctors gave her some medicine to slow her heart back down. Then they X-rayed her heart and saw her heart walls are really thick and there was some protein buildup that turned out to be amyloidosis, which is this crazy, rare disease that has a high mortality rate. We looked it up online and saw that patients have an average of six months to live from the moment of diagnosis. And we were like, "You're fucking kidding me!" She's 48. She's normal. She eats very healthy and takes care of herself. So what the fuck? We went through the Mayo clinic and she did chemotherapy for a year, which was fucking horrible.

This happened while you were writing and recording *Hushed and Grim*?

KELLIHER: Yes, and there's nothing you can do except watch your wife suffer and try to soothe her. In the back of my mind, I was always thinking, "Fuck, man, if don't know what I'll do if I lose her. I'd be completely lost in this existence without her. How am I gonna raise my kids without my wife around?" But she had the chemo and now she's doing really well. But you just never know how life can sneak up on you. You think you're healthy one minute and the next minute you've got this crazy rare disease. And now, every little ache or pain — or if she gets tired — we're like, "Oh man, is the disease coming back?" And that's fuckin' scary.

How were you able to focus and create when your wife was ill? Was it cathartic to work when she was resting?

KELLIHER: I think it has become that way. When my mom was dying in hospice I was by her bedside with my laptop and a guitar. I was overdubbing a lot of the stuff in the *Emperor of Sand* demos. And this time, I was just on this writing binge. I don't know if it was cathartic because I was still extremely sad that she was so sick, but it brought out this fire in me to write and write and write.

Brendan O'Brien produced your last album, *Emperor of Sand,* as well *as Crack the Skye*. This time, you worked with David Bottrill, who has produced albums for Tool and Peter Gabriel.

HINDS: We're really good friends with the Tool guys. We told them we were looking for a producer and they worked with him before and had a great experience. They were like, "This guy is the man!"

KELLIHER: Honestly, we were pretty happy with the way *Crack the Skye* turned out and *Emperor of Sand*, so we were ready to work with Brendan O'Brien again. He's a great guy and a great producer. But Warner Bros. wanted us to talk to some other people who wanted to work with us. Dave Bottrill was one of them, and he was very proactive. We got on a Zoom call with him and immediately he was like, "Alright, I've listened to all your demos and I've got some ideas." He had a million notes and specific suggestions for every song. That impressed us. And he's a very intelligent guy, very pleasant to work with, and he knew how to circumvent any problems in a way that would keep everybody happy, which is what we needed.

Were there any particular talents or techniques that David used to make *Hushed and Grim* better?

KELLIHER: There were a couple songs where David had this idea of playing five guitar tracks of the same thing, but adjusting the tuning from A-440 to 442, 445, 446. Every one of them was just a little bit out of tune and created this wall of clean guitar with this natural chorus effect on it. That was very cool.

HINDS: We tend to go fast a lot. We don't really know how to slow down. So David helped us out with that. Also, there were times when a song would be really long and it would be in the same key for too long. So he would suggest changing keys and doing more of a classic turnaround — go into another two chords to get back to your starting chord. It was very intelligent stuff. When it was all over with, I was definitely... Dave is a new friend of mine now. I love Brendan to death, but I'm glad we went with someone else to get a different perspective on the music. I'm glad I can call David a friend, too. GW

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LOS ANGELES

DOOM CREW INC. **IS THE FIRST COMPLETE BLACK LABEL SOCIETY ALBUM — EVER — TO FEATURE A SECOND GUITARIST GOING TOE-TO-TOE WITH ZAKK WYLDE. OVER THE NEXT FEW PAGES, BLS'S GUITAR DUO — ZAKK AND DARIO LORINA — ESCORT YOU DEEP INTO THE TEMPLE OF DOOM**

BY **RICHARD BIENSTOCK** ● PHOTOS BY **JEN ROSENSTEIN**

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Zakk Wylde [*left, obviously!***] with a Wylde Audio Nomad — and Dario Lorina with a Wylde Audio Barbarian**

ZAKK WYLDE HAS RELEASED 10 ALBUMS with Black Label Society over roughly the last two decades. And while the band has always functioned as a two-guitar juggernaut onstage (the more axes and amps the better, we suppose), in the studio BLS has always been strictly the Zakk show, with the Wylde One handling all the guitars — from riffs to melodies to solos (and even twin harmonies) — himself.

That is, until now.

Behold *Doom Crew Inc.*, Black Label Society's 11th record, and the first to feature a second guitarist going lick-for-lick alongside Zakk. And the guitarist in question — 32-year-old Dario Lorina — is, as would be expected, no slouch. Lorina has served as a member of Black Label Society since the tour for 2014's *Catacombs of the Black Vatican*, and on his own has released two albums of high-intensity shred on Shrapnel Records, as well as logged time with long-running metal acts like Lizzy Borden.

As for what led Zakk to bring him on board in the studio this time? "Because Dario's awesome," he says simply.

MUCH of the beauty, as it were, of Black Label Society's music is that, to some extent, you always know what to expect — crushing rhythms built on the foundation of what Zakk calls "Mount Riffmore" (that'd be Sabbath, Zeppelin, Cream and Deep Purple); fist-pumping choruses; insanely intricate, mind-bogglingly speedy solos — and Wylde and the band once again deliver in spades. From the Sabbathian stomper "Set You Free" to the jacked-up boogie blues workout "Gather All My Sins," the classic-rock-on-steroids groover "Shelter Me" to the sludge-metal chugfest "Gospel of Lies," there's no shortage of high-octane bangers on *Doom Crew Inc.* And while there's also a smattering of characteristic Zakk piano ballads in the form of "Forever and a Day" and the closing "Farewell Ballad," *Doom Crew Inc.* is, as Wylde proudly states, a celebration of the power and glory of the guitar.

And this time, there's two of 'em.

"To me, it's just about getting more," says Zakk about bringing in Dario. In this exclusive interview, he sits down with Lorina to tell *Guitar World* exactly how they did it.

Black Label Society, at least in the studio, has always been a one-man-operation when it comes to the guitars. What made you decide to bring Dario into the recording process this time?

ZAKK WYLDE He's an amazing player, and there's just more that we can do together. When you have a real two-guitar-player band like the Allman Brothers or Judas Priest, you can do those harmonies. And not only that — Dario can shred. So it's just like, "Why don't you do a solo here?" It's like Night Ranger, where you have Jeff [*Watson*] and Brad [*Gillis*], and they're doing harmonies together, but at the same time, they're both shredding all over the records. That's where we're at now. So having Dario in the band is awesome. That's why I said we have to make sure Dario is included on the cover of the magazine. Because he's all over the record. It's not just me this time.

Plus, he's a very handsome man.

WYLDE [*Laughs*] Of course! He brings a lot of mutants and people like that who otherwise probably wouldn't be at a Black Label show!

Dario, you've been with Black Label Society for several years, but this is the first time you've been on a Black Label record. How did it come about?

DARIO LORINA I guess I've been in the band, what, seven years now? The way I joined was I was going back and forth with Blasko [*Rob Nicholson*], who plays bass with Ozzy and manages Black Label, and I think at the time he had heard one of my instrumental albums. Then it came to me that Black Label were looking for another guitar player. We were already communicating, so they were like, "Send over some videos of you playing and singing some Black Label stuff." I sent the videos over and then Zakk had me come out and meet up at the Black Vatican [*Wylde's home studio in L.A.*]. And that was it.

As far as playing on the new record, it just kind of progressed to this over the years. During live shows we would be trading solos, or I would double one of his leads, or during something like "Fire It Up" [*from 2005's* Mafia] we'd go out in the crowd and jam together. The back-and-forth thing just kind of became part of the show, and that continued onto this album.

That back-and-forth thing is all over *Doom Crew Inc.*, with you guys trading solos in a headcutting style. A good example would be on the first single, "Set You Free." Were your parts worked out separate from one another, or were you improvising together?

WYLDE For a lot of the solos I actually wrote out the whole thing. The "Set You Free" one, that was completely constructed, and it was recorded with just me soloing. And I really dug the way it came out. But it was long enough where I just went, "Dario, you play this part, I'll play this part and then at the end of it we'll do that pentatonic lick together." So we sent the track from the Vatican over to his studio, the Dark Chapel [*Lorina's home studio in Las Vegas*], and 10 minutes later Dario sent it back. And we were like "Slamming. Great. *Done*."

It's a pretty intense lead, to say the least. Dario, is it difficult having to play Zakk's licks?

LORINA Absolutely. But in general when you're playing somebody's else's stuff, that

person has his own style and his own technique. And with Zakk, it's not easy. Some of his diatonic runs, I might play them one way, and, of course, he's gonna play it a different way. Or some of the cool, tricky pentatonic things, it's like, "Oh, wow, that's a little different than what I would normally do..." So I just have to get my head around things like the transitions between the strings, or if the note's double-picked or whatever's going on. I definitely had to sit down many times and go, "Okay, let me practice this one out first..."

How did you handle the leads on the rest of the record?

LORINA The ones Zakk had written out completely were "Set You Free," "End of Days" and "You Made Me Want to Live." For the rest of them I wrote my own parts. And a lot of it was improvised. The way I work is, I'll start playing and then I'll keep bits that I like. Or I might write out part of the lick, because maybe I want it to end a certain way. But I've done two instrumental albums of my own, and doing this one was sort of the same process for me. I'd just improvise, come up with some licks and then try to get a good take.

Zakk, you've played with some great guitarists over the years, both in and out of Black Label Society. What makes Dario special?

WYLDE The cool thing is that Dario, even being so much younger, he has a great grasp of the guitar. He has a great vibrato, he's blues-based... and the blues stuff is where a lot of your phrasing and things like that come from. And you can't force somebody to like blues, you know? Somebody might be really attracted to King Edward [*Van Halen*], and they love the tapping and they love all the crazy stuff. But then you go, "But, you know, the base of the King Edward soup is blues." Like, if you asked Eddie to play "Red House," he could play it. Or "Crossroads." I mean, Eric Clapton was his guy. So it was all based in blues. It's not just "Spanish Fly" and all the shredding, ripping fast stuff.

I remember when I was younger I would go see Dave DiPietro [*guitarist for New Jersey metal act T.T. Quick*] play in the clubs. I could run scales and play fast and stuff like that, but when he would play blues stuff I was just like, "Wow!" I could *feel* what he was playing. And to me it was a completely different vocabulary than just blazing finger exercises. And I see that in some of these younger guys now, whether it's Jared James Nichols or Richie Faulkner or Dario. They have great technique and can play fast, but they also have great vibrato and they can play blues.

LORINA I started playing when I was six or seven, and Eddie Van Halen was my guy. I remember driving around in the car with my dad and I'd always put in the *Van Halen* cassette. And I loved guys like George Lynch and John Sykes, but then I also loved Johnny Winter and a lot of the classic blues stuff. So as far as blues influences, there's definitely a similarity there in style and technique between me and Zakk. But I'm also just rooted in, like, that Eighties kind of playing.

Dario, I remember first hearing about you when you were just a teenager and playing with [*former Warrant singer*] Jani Lane.

LORINA Yeah. Thinking back to the Jani time, those guys were so awesome because I was definitely a lot younger. But they took me under their wing and guided me and helped me grow. Those were just great times.

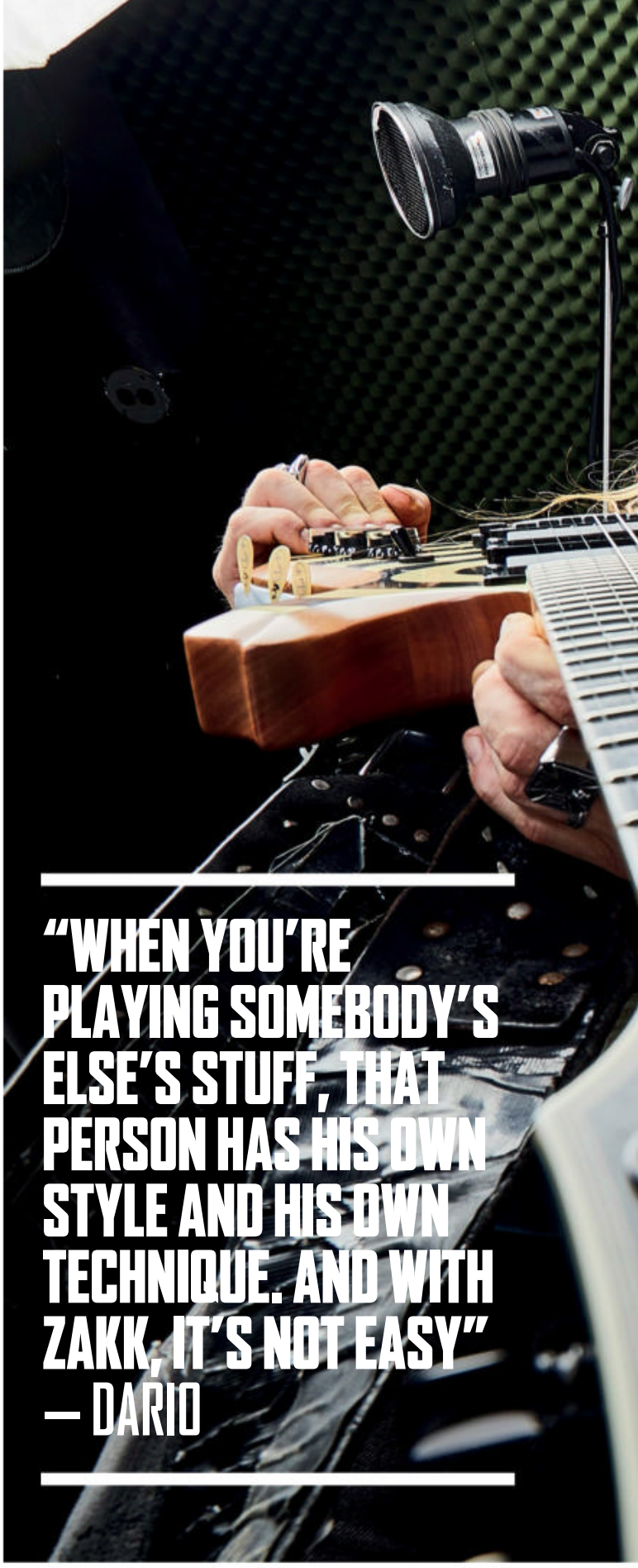
When it came to the new album, what was the writing process like for you, Zakk?

WYLDE Like it always is. I have one of my [*Wylde Audio*] amps with a 4x12 [*cabinet*] out in the gym, and I sit out there with a cup of coffee first thing in the morning. I play at a low volume with reverb and delay so it sounds like I'm at Madison Square Garden and I just start writing riffs. [*Laughs*] I think of it like this: You and me are going looking for dinosaur bones — we know in this area over here we're gonna find something, so why don't we just dig today and see what comes up? And if we find nothing? No problem — we'll come back tomorrow. But they're out there, you know what I mean? It's just a matter of digging. We'll find something. And then eventually we'll dig up the Pazuzu statue [*from* The Exorcist] and all hell breaks loose!

Are you working alone during the recording process?

WYLDE The way we end up doing the records now, I'll do everything. For this one I recorded all the rhythm guitars before the fellas came out. Adam [*Fuller, engineer*] and I went up to my studio and did it to a click track. If there's certain parts where the tempos are changing, we'll stop right there, up the tempo on the click and then I'll play the riff. Then when it slows back down we'll stop again, slow the click down and keep going. So by the time JD [*bassist John DeServio*] and Jeff [*drummer Jeff Fabb*] get out here to track the bass and the drums, I've already doubled the guitars and it sounds exactly like what you're hearing on the record. Jeff will listen to it and he'll play air drums to it and then he'll go, "All right, I know what I'm going to do." And he goes into the drum room and lays it down. It's the same with JD. That's pretty much the way it works.

To me, it's just the most painless way to do it. I mean, the way we used to do it with Ozzy on *No Rest for the Wicked* and *No More Tears*, we'd just rehearse and rehearse these songs, and it's just like, "What are we doing? We know the songs, right? We know 'Miracle Man.' We know 'No More Tears.' We know 'Mama, I'm Coming Home.' " Rehearsing is what you do when you're getting ready for the tour, you know? Because when you rehearse too much before recording, you take away all the spontaneity, all the magic, all the fire. You're sucking the life out of the thing.



Dario, did you just record all your parts at your own studio?

LORINA I did. Zakk pretty much sent me everything all at once, and I think it took me about a week to do all my parts. I'm a morning guy, so I was up with coffee, banging them out one by one from Friday to Friday. And then I would listen back and make sure, "Okay, is this what I want as a final thing?" And then I sent it all off.

What gear were you using?

LORINA I used a Wylde Audio Barbarian with

EMGs through a [*Marshall*] JCM800 100-watt and my old [*Peavey*] 5150 cab. And I think I threw an overdrive or two on there — a [*Boss SD-1*] Super Overdrive and a Seymour Duncan 805, which is sort of Tube Screamer-esque. And that was really it.

How about you, Zakk?

WYLDE For guitars I used my [*Wylde Audio*] Nomads, and also a couple of the Heathens. I could have used one guitar to do the whole record if I wanted to, but I felt like picking and choosing because the guitars were all just sitting there. I was like, "Oh, let me do a solo with this one..." And then for amps I was just using my 100-watt Wylde Audio head — the same one I used for [*2018's*] *Grimmest Hits*. That was it. It's just crushing. It's based off my JCM800, which to me is the perfect amp. When we designed the Wylde Audio amp, all I was going for was, "Give me more of *that*." Because the 800 does everything you want it to do. It's like a pair of Levi's and a T-shirt — I don't know how you're going to improve on it. It pretty much never goes out of style.

The Wylde Audio amps still aren't available to the public, correct?

WYLDE No. We've talked about putting them into production, and that would obviously be the next thing to do. I definitely want to do the head, because that's the one I use. Although when we go out on the road, I still bring out my old Marshalls just in case anything goes down. And if we're ever doing shows where we have to use rental gear it's always a JCM800, a 2203. Because it has everything you need. And if you want more distortion? Just throw a pedal in front of it and you're off and running.

So you were writing at home, you were recording at home, you were off the road due to the pandemic... that's a lot of at-home time.

WYLDE I mean, I loved every second of being home. I always do. And when I'm touring I love touring. When we're out on the road, we're doing what we love, you know? That's the reason you had posters of Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath and all your favorite guitar players up on the wall when you were a kid. Because that's what you wanted to do with your life. And I'm doing it. So I'm blessed. Every night before we go up onstage, JD and

I fist bump and he goes, "Dude, we've got the best job in the world." And I'm like, "No shit!"

What did you do to fill your days during this extended break?

WYLDE The same thing I do all the time. I lift weights. I drink coffee. I walk the dogs. The running joke I'd tell my wife was, "You're married to a professional dog walker now!" Then it came time — "We're going to do another record." And it was, "Okay, cool. I'll start writing." And here we are.

How about you, Dario?

LORINA I have an online guitar school called Death Grip Academy [*deathgripacademy.com*], and I was doing a lot with that. So I was still playing every day. And then at some point Zakk called and he was like, "Hey, man, I'm going to send these songs to you — come up with some solos." It just happened like that. But other than that it kind of felt like an extended break of not being on the road. Because here we are now starting to play shows again, and looking back at that year-and-a-half or whatever it was, it just feels like, "Did that really happen?"

WYLDE We did a show at Sturgis recently and me and the guys were laughing about getting out onstage again. I was telling them, "I had to practice standing up!" Because when you're home, you don't stand up with the guitar on. You sit on the couch or at the kitchen table, noodling, running scales, whatever you're doing. Now we have to get used to playing standing up again.

Maybe the *Doom Crew Inc.* tour can be fully seated performances...

WYLDE [*Laughs*] That'd be great. Just roll a couch onstage. Comfortable metal!

Zakk, you've been doing Black Label Society for more than 20 years now. Does it feel like it's been that long?

WYLDE Not at all. The crazy thing is, I remember looking at old magazines from the Seventies and Keith Richards would be on the cover and it would say, "Keith Richards — 16 years with the Rolling Stones!" So I'm laughing because Black Label's been 23 years now. But it doesn't seem like it. I remember when my dad turned 80, he was just like, "Where has the time gone?" He would show me pictures of him during WWII, hanging out at the barracks playing cards or whatever, and he would go, "This guy got killed. This guy got his brains blown out. This guy died with me, he was under a tank. This guy got cancer. This guy's still alive..." It didn't seem that long ago to him. Just like for me, first playing with the boss doesn't seem that long ago. *No More Tears* doesn't seem that long ago. I don't feel like I'm 54. I still feel the same as I did when I was 23.

"THE BLUES STUFF IS WHERE A LOT OF YOUR PHRASING AND THINGS LIKE THAT COME FROM. AND YOU CAN'T FORCE SOMEBODY TO LIKE BLUES, YOU KNOW"
— ZAKK

Just like Dario, you got your start professionally when you were fairly young. Recently, a video emerged online of you playing guitar alongside a pre-Skid Row Sebastian Bach at rock photographer Mark Weiss' wedding in 1987. You're 20 years old, you're wearing grey slacks, you're playing a Telecaster, and you had just joined Ozzy's band. What advice would you give that guy?

WYLDE Well, I'll say this. My son was studying to be a doctor, and one day he was like, "Dad, I don't think I want to do this..." And I went, "Fuck what your mom says. Fuck what I say. Whatever it is that gets your dick hard and that you have passion for and that you look forward to doing every day, that's what you should be doing." That's it. So that's my advice for that guy, and for anyone. Whatever it is that you love, that's what you should be doing.

Maybe I'd also suggest that a Tele might not be the right axe for him...

WYLDE [*Laughs*] Or, "Change your pants!" But then again, between having that guitar up high and those pants and shirt, here we are 30-plus years later. So it all worked out! GW

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One Zakk, two necks!
Wylde with a doubleneck
Wylde Audio Barbarian

Zakk's Dirty Dozen

FROM OZZY OSBOURNE'S "MIRACLE MAN" TO GENERATION AXE'S "HIGHWAY STAR," ZAKK WYLDE DISCUSSES 12 MUSICAL MILESTONES FROM A CAREER SPANNING MORE THAN THREE DECADES

BY **RICHARD BIENSTOCK** ● PHOTOS BY **JEN ROSENSTEIN**

ZAKK WYLDE CAN recall once being interviewed alongside Buddy Guy — the two appeared on the 2016 Experience Hendrix tour together — when somebody asked the blues legend a question. "They go, 'Buddy, what is it about Zakk's playing that you like?'" Wylde lets out a huge laugh. "And I said, 'I can answer that for ya — he likes the space in between the songs!' "

Wylde is, of course, being characteristically self-deprecating. And why not? He knows full well that over the course of his more than 30-year recording career he's laid down his fair share of stone-cold killer jams. With that in mind, here's a dirty dozen of Zakk's greatest guitar moments — from Ozzy tracks to Black Label Society tunes, guest spots to covers and more — straight from the man himself.

"MIRACLE MAN"
(Ozzy Osbourne, *No Rest for the Wicked*, 1988)

This was the first riff I ever wrote with Ozzy. The fingering I was doing on that was "Foxey Lady" [*sings "Foxey Lady" riff*]. Because I remember when I learned that — it's the same thing [*sings "Miracle Man" riff*]. And then I just added the end part. And then with the rhythm, I just made it obviously a metal thing. But I was just trying to figure out a lick, you know? And, like they say, everything comes from somewhere. Muddy Waters could have influenced the Stones on something, and then Muddy would have said , "Oh, I got that from my uncle, and my uncle got it from one of his friends that played guitar..." Then it's just your interpretation of something else. But I always find it interesting to go back and find out where things came from. And you go, "Oh, okay."

"CRAZY BABIES"
(Ozzy Osbourne, *No Rest for the Wicked*)

I remember me and Randy Castillo were jamming that riff and then doing all the pushes and everything. So I remember when we were noodling, that's where that one came about.

"MAMA, I'M COMING HOME"
(Ozzy Osbourne, *No More Tears*, 1991)

That actually came from me and Oz jamming on the piano in my apartment in North Hollywood. So it started on piano and then when we got in the studio I transposed it to guitar. It's in open E, so that's where I came up with the guitar line that goes from E to A. And then obviously my love for the Allmans and Skynyrd and everything, that's where the Albert Lee-type country bends in the beginning came from. Even on "No More Tears," there's a ton of me slipping in little country things. Like, the slide part is a "Free Bird" type thing. I'd be sneaking in those Allmans-y, Skynyrd-y things as much as they could fit within the context of what we were doing. Just putting that seasoning on the food.

"I DON'T WANT TO CHANGE THE WORLD"
(Ozzy Osbourne, *No More Tears*)

That came out as a goof. We were at Joe's Garage, Frank Zappa's old place, and we were jamming. I remember I was playing the main riff, and then I'd get through it and just stop. And then you or me would say something into the mic, like, "How not to ever get a date." Or, "I have no job and I live with my parents." And then we'd go back into the riff. It was just us on the floor, crying-laughing and coming up with all this stuff that we kept saying in between that riff. Then Ozzy comes walking into the room and he goes, "What is that?" I'm like, "What are you talkin' about?" And he says, "That thing you're playing. That riff." I go, "Oh, it's just a joke..." And he goes, "We're going to use that." Next thing you know, it won a Grammy!

"Having a limited amount of things forces you to have to come up with something great," Wylde says

"LOSIN' YOUR MIND"
(Pride & Glory, *Pride & Glory*, 1994)

We had a blast making that record. And "Losin' Your Mind" was one I thought came out really great. With the banjo thing in there, I had to figure out how to tune it. So I got one of those banjos that you tune like a guitar, and I played it so that the fingering was pretty much the same as it would be on a guitar. Playing in banjo tuning is great as well, but you have to work at it. And I just needed it for that specific part. But with the banjo on there and all the country bends, it just came out really slamming. And with how crushing Brian [*Tichy*]'s drums sounded and James [*Lomenzo*]'s bass playing was, I was really happy overall. Again, it's my love for the Allmans and Skynyrd and the Marshall Tucker Band and Blackfoot, that whole movement. I mean, Molly Hatchet, I still listen to that stuff. I mean, [*Molly Hatchet guitarist*] Dave Hlubek, his playing on those records is ridiculous. Really great playing, really great tones, the production is great. It's just really good stuff.

"SPOKE IN THE WHEEL"
(Black Label Society, *Sonic Brew*, 1998)

The first Black Label song I ever wrote. I was sitting in a hotel room in Japan, and I think I was doing promotion for [*Wylde's 1996 acoustic solo album*] *Book of Shadows*, or something was going on. And I remember I ended up writing that song because after we did *Book of Shadows* I was like, "What am I? I'm not ready to be James Taylor yet, and just be, you know, a singer-songwriter." So it was like, I knew I still wanted to do the heavy stuff, but at the same time I was writing that song.

"BORED TO TEARS"
(Black Label Society, *Sonic Brew*)

So I did "Spoke in the Wheel," but then when me and [original Black Label Society drummer] Phil [Ondich] got together, when we

were in the studio and we tracked "Bored to Tears," I was just thinking about simplicity. We were talking about simple riffs, whether it was "Smoke on the Water," "Iron Man," "Aqualung," anything like that. Just the simplicity of amazingly awesome, great riffs. Because, you know, if it was easy, everyone would do it. There's an art to it. It's like, if I gave you minimal ingredients to make us a meal, you'd still want to come up with something great. Or, let's give you two colors and see what you can paint. Then you have to use your imagination. Because if I gave you white and red, if you blended them together, now you also have pink. So you use your imagination to come up with different combinations. So with the "Bored to Tears" riff, I remember us listening to it and just cranking it. It was just so simple — three notes — and I was like, "Man, that came out pretty cool..." Having a limited amount of things forces you to have to come up with something great.

"STILLBORN"
(Black Label Society, *The Blessed Hellride*, 2003)

That's another one where it's like, "Give me three crayons..." You know what I'm saying? In this case it's, here's an F sharp, an E and a B. That's pretty much all that's in that song. And the chorus is, what? You've got F sharp to D, E and B. That's it. And the riff is one note. So let me see what we can do with one note. Simplicity.

"REBORN"
(Damageplan, *New Found Power*, 2004)

Dime was in town and he was like, "Zakk, you want to put a solo on something?" And I said, "Yeah, Dime, whatever you want me to do, man." So that's how that came about — another drinking session o' doom with the Dimebag. That's the only time we recorded together. Although I also remember going down to a Pantera show [*on their tour for 2000's* Reinventing the Steel] and getting onstage and jamming with them. I walked out, I think it was at Irvine Meadows or something like that, and I had my dog Dorian with me, my Rottweiler. You can see it on YouTube — "Zakk Walks Onstage with his Dog" or something like that. Dime gave me his guitar, and it was at the end of one of their songs, just ending on E or something like that, and I started noodling.

"IN THIS RIVER"
(Black Label Society, *Mafia*, 2005)

Originally I didn't write that for Dime. It was after Dime passed away that I was like, "Yeah, that's his song." Just because of the lyrics and everything. And live we dedicate the song to him all the time. It's in every show we do, and it always will be.

"SUPERNAUT"
(Zakk Sabbath, *Live in Detroit*, 2016)

When we're out there doing the Zakk Sabbath thing, I love playing the Sabbath stuff — "N.I.B," "Fairies Wear Boots," "Never Say Die," all of it. It's just like, it's the riff... and then a great melody over it. That's all you need. It's steak, potatoes and vegetables, and it's done really well. There's really not much going on, but it's amazing. You don't need all this insane production and shit flying around all over the place, because the song's so great.

The magic is in those songs, man. And "Supernaut," we usually open up with that one. Like I was saying, it's just an amazing riff, and then you've got two chords and the verse. That's the whole song. And it's like, "Wow, this tastes amazing! What'd you put on this?" And the answer is nothing, really. It's just a good piece of meat. You don't have to put tons of salt, tons of pepper, tons of cayenne, whatever, all over it. No A.1. Sauce. I can just cook it in the pan and serve it to you and you're like, "Zakk, this is incredible!" "Yeah, I know."

"HIGHWAY STAR"
(Generation Axe, *The Guitars That Destroyed the World: Live in China*, 2019)

First off, it's an honor to play with those guys [*The Generation Axe tour featured Wylde, Steve Vai, Nuno Bettencourt, Yngwie Malmsteen and Tosin Abasi*]. And it's so much fun hanging out together. We would all sit in the bus telling horror stories about the music business. The stories Yngwie's got...

I remember we were all crying, laughing at how ridiculous it all is. Especially when you're first coming up and you don't know anything and you're all naïve. You're like, "Well, they would never do that to *me*..." Steve just goes, "If anything, I'm glad I put this thing together just for the comedy!"

As far as "Highway Star," I mean, that's Deep Purple — Mount Riffmore. So doing that song was great every night. Everyone would get up there and do their thing. When any one of those guys picks up a guitar, within two notes I already know who's playing what. As soon as Nuno picks up a guitar, you know it's him. Yngwie, you know it's him. Steve, you know it's him. Same with Tosin. It really just goes to show you how awesome the guitar is in regard to everybody's personality really coming out in their playing. It really truly does. And there's no competition. Like Father Steve would always say, and it's the best quote ever, he would go, "Zakk, there is no *best* guitar player. It's, 'Who's your *favorite* guitar player?'" You know? Who do you prefer? And I mean, I love Yngwie just as much as I love David Gilmour. Hearing Yngwie play "Black Star" or "Evil Eye," and then hearing David do "Comfortably Numb," they're both devastating. It just depends on what mood I'm in and what I'd rather hear in the moment. GW

30 YEARS OF *NO MORE TEARS*

IN ADDITION TO 2021 being the year Black Label Society are releasing their 11th album and getting back onstage, it also marks the 30th anniversary of the release of *No More Tears*, Wylde's biggest album with "the boss," Ozzy Osbourne. It was something we couldn't ignore!

What do you recall most about the experience of recording *No More Tears*?
ZAKK WYLDE Well, obviously [*1988's*] *No Rest for the Wicked* was my first record with the boss. And I was like, "Wow, I can't believe I'm gonna contribute to the sound and the direction of Ozzy's music!" Being such a huge Randy [*Rhoads*] fan and Jake [*E. Lee*] fan and Sabbath fan, that was a big thing — I remember it like it was yesterday. So we had an ass-kicking time making that record, and then after the craziness of that tour, *No More Tears* was more of a relaxed kind of atmosphere. We just had more experience, which led to bringing in songs like "Road to Nowhere" and "Mama, I'm Coming Home."

How did the title track come together?
WYLDE I remember with "No More Tears," Mikey [*Mike Inez*] started jamming that out on the bass. And then Randy [*Castillo*] started in on drums, and John [*Sinclair*] started playing that keyboard thing. I had a slide laying around because of my love for the Allmans and Skynyrd and everything, and I started doing that line, the major-key, Skynyrd-y Allmans thing. Then we stopped, and Mike was still playing the bass and Randy was playing the drums and we did like the whole "War Pigs," "Black Dog" thing, where Ozzy sings and then we play the riff. That was how that happened. The song almost wrote itself. But overall we had a blast making that record. And the tour was frickin' hilarious, too. It was just a lot of fun times, man.

Dario, you were just a few years old when *No More Tears* was released. But was it a big record for you when you first started playing guitar?
DARIO LORINA Oh, yeah. Especially that song and that solo, for sure. But I loved all the classic Ozzy stuff. And I loved everything Zakk started to do with Black Label after it. Zakk was a guy I was always into.

— Richard Bienstock

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SOUND CHECK

Gibson's new Generation Collection G-200

GUITAR WORLD GOLD AWARD PERFORMANCE

Port Authority

GIBSON GENERATION G-00 AND G-200 ACOUSTICS

By Chris Gill

BY DESIGN, THE traditional acoustic guitar is built to project sound toward the listening audience. Unfortunately, this places the ears of the person playing the guitar in a less than optimal position behind and above the guitar's soundhole. Sure, most acoustic guitars still sound pretty damn good from the player's perspective, but it's just not as good as it could be — or is it?

Over the years, luthiers have experimented with placing sound ports on an acoustic guitar's side (usually the upper bass bout) to direct at least some of the guitar's output upward towards the player as well. Numerous builders have adopted this feature, including, most notably, John Monteleone on his dazzling archtops, so there's certainly some validity to this approach. Recently, Gibson joined the ranks of guitar builders that offer side sound ports with the introduction of its new Generation Collection guitars.

The Gibson Generation Collection currently consists of four different models: the G-00 (parlor), G-45 (round-shoulder dreadnought), G-Writer (square-shoulder dreadnought cutaway) and G-200 (jumbo cutaway). The first two models are

the gear in review

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SOUNDCHECK

For this review's accompanying video, go to guitarworld.com/january2022

The Gibson Generation G-00 [*left*] and the Gibson Player Port [*below*], which can be found on every Generation Collection guitar

purely acoustic, while the latter two have built-in LR Baggs Element Bronze under-saddle pickup/preamp electronic systems. We took a look at the G-00 and G-200, which are the least and most expensive Generation models, respectively.

FEATURES The G-00 is based upon the design of the 14-fret neck Gibson L-00 introduced in the Thirties, while the G-200 is based on Gibson's classic J-200 model but with slightly slimmer dimensions. Both models share common features and specs, including a Sitka spruce top, walnut back and sides and utile (an African tonewood with properties similar to mahogany) neck with striped ebony fingerboard. Both tops have traditional scalloped X-bracing and the bodies and necks have a satin nitrocellulose finish. The necks have Gibson's slim, rounded neck profile, a 16-inch radius, 20 standard (medium) frets, 1.73-inch nut width, Tusq nut and saddle and chrome Grover Mini Rotomatic tuners. Both are also constructed using a compound dovetail neck-to-body joint affixed with hot hide glue to facilitate better tone transfer throughout the guitar.

There are a few differences between the two models, however. The G-00 has a 24.75-inch scale length, and the fingerboard has acrylic dot inlays. The bridge has a rectangular design, and is made of striped ebony. The G-200 has a longer 25.5-inch scale length, and is decorated with fancier G-Collection single bar fret marker fingerboard inlays and single-layer black binding surrounding the body's top and back. The G-200's bridge features a "belly down" design, and is also made of striped ebony. The biggest difference between the two models is that the G-200 includes a built-in LR Baggs Element Bronze under-saddle pickup and preamp with soundhole mounted volume control and ¼-inch endpin output jack.

PERFORMANCE Both the G-00 and G-200 are expertly constructed by the highly skilled craftsmen at Gibson's Bozeman, Montana, acoustic guitar factory. The satin nitrocellulose finish is applied so thin that the materials almost look unfinished, but what these guitars lack in glitz and gloss they more than compensate for in tone and dynamic responsiveness. The Gibson Player Port on the side is surrounded with a plastic ring that reinforces the hole and prevents damage. Construction is clean, solid and meticulous, and the guitar's provide outstanding playability thanks to the slim neck profile.

Tonally, both models sound quite different than one would expect, thanks to the side port. The sound is louder, but also more focused and direct than one might expect. While some of the sound is directed out of the side toward the player, the side player port does not adversely affect the primary tone coming out of the traditional soundhole.

The small-body G-00 sounds like a good parlor-size acoustic should, with well-balanced overall tone that's ideal for fingerstyle playing. The jumbo G-200 model delivers bigger bass and bolder treble, with a nice, warm midrange that makes strummed chord rhythms drive like a freight train. The LR Baggs Element Bronze system produces outstanding natural acoustic tone. While having only a volume control seems rather no frills, it's actually nice to part with the redundancy of EQ and feedback suppression features commonly found on acoustic-electric guitar amps these days.

CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICES:
Gibson G-00, $999,
Gibson G-200, $1,999
MANUFACTURER:
Gibson, Gibson.com

- The Gibson Player Port on the side projects sound output upwards toward the player's ear to enhance the sound quality that the performer hears.

- The G-00 is a small-body, parlor-size flattop guitar based on Gibson's classic 14-fret neck L-00 model from the Thirties.
- The G-200 is a jumbo flattop model based on the Gibson's classic J-200 but with a shallower 4-inch body and slightly smaller lower bout.
- The G-200 features a built-in LR Baggs Element Bronze under-saddle pickup and preamp system to amplify natural acoustic tone.
- **THE BOTTOM LINE:**
If you love the sound of a Gibson acoustic but just want to hear more of you while you're playing, the Gibson Generation Collection offers a variety of popular models with the innovative Gibson Player Port to satisfy a wide variety of players.

Orange Is the New Shred

DEAN GUITARS MD24 FLOYD ROASTED MAPLE

By Paul Riario

IF YOUR EXHAUSTIVE search over the dizzying plethora of modern hot-rodded superstrats has proven to be overwhelming, I hear you. Once you dig deep into the multitude of guitars outfitted with higher-output pickups, premium double-locking tremolos and jumbo frets on a fast neck, you'll find that the biggest deal-breaker may come down to price. And if that's your hangup, allow me to point you toward the streamlined superstrats in Dean Guitars MD Series, which tick all the aforementioned shred-tastic boxes without forcing you to cough up Bezos bucks. Dean Guitars has often been pigeonholed for their axes shaped in the pointy, elongated V, Z and Razorback varieties, but don't let that overshadow the fact that Dean also offers killer guitars in more traditional shapes, and the excellent MD24 Floyd Roasted Maple reviewed here in this eye-catching vintage orange finish confirms it's a banging superstrat that combines knock-out looks with contemporary upgrades at a price guaranteed to make you "shred" tears of joy.

FEATURES If you have a sneaking suspicion this guitar looks somewhat familiar, you'd be correct, in that the MD24 shares the wider cutaways, 24 frets and wide-script headstock logo of a Dean DS90 superstrat from the early Nineties. But that's where the similarities end. This bolt-on constructed MD24 is not a remake at all, but an inspired bare-bones model with taut refinement and tactile ergonomics. The guitar comes in only two finishes — vintage blue or vintage orange — and features a solid basswood body with a flat top and contoured arm cut, 25 ½-inch scale, a combined roasted maple neck and fingerboard (12-inch radius) that provides stability and rigidity, 24 jumbo frets that widen to more than 2 ¼-inch at the last fret, abalone dot inlays, direct-mount Seymour Duncan TB5 and APH-1 sandblasted zebra parchment finish pickups, single volume knob and 3-way toggle switch, a recessed Floyd Rose 1000 Series tremolo system and Grover (18:1 ratio) tuners.

PERFORMANCE What's striking is the satin-finished maple neck on the MD24 is so fire-roasted, it displays more of a nutty chocolate hue compared to the more common caramelized color of roasted necks that have been in vogue as of late. It's a beautiful contrast that compliments the sharp look of its vintage orange finish, but beauty is only skin-deep, right? Roasted (or "torrefied") necks have been popular for their sturdiness and brighter tone that makes notes and harmonics pop from the fretboard — and the MD24 delivers just that with explosive definition and detail. The slender C-profile neck feels relaxed because it's smoothly carved and contoured uniformly from the 1st to the 18th fret, right where your palm meets the heel. What's nice is the blockish heel found on typical bolt-on guitars has been decreased to a slightly sculpted one that you can hang onto without feeling obstructed. The jumbo frets are skillfully polished and feel great under your fingers, and having 24 of them allows you to scream notes in those upper registers not found on most guitars.

The guitar's Seymour Duncan TB5 bridge and APH-1 neck pickups are a complementary pair that telegraph the right amount of kick and punch while being firmly articulate. The TB5 has that enhanced Marshall midrange bark and top-end sparkle with a hot output that stays focused, while the APH-1 neck dishes out that classic Alnico sweetness — think Slash's neck pickup tone in "Sweet Child O'Mine." I spent a lot of time with the MD24 Floyd Roasted Maple ripping countless notes and whammy bar dives, and can still say it's a big sounding guitar that's substantially well-constructed with a setup that's prepped for one speed: fast. And considering its bold look, you'll agree you can no longer ignore the orange guitar in the room.

CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICE: $899
MANUFACTURER: Dean Guitars, deanguitars.com

- The premium roasted maple neck and fingerboard ensures exceptional stability and delivers a powerfully bright tone.
- The direct mount Seymour Duncan TB5 trembucker bridge and APH-1 alnico II neck pickups run the tonal gamut from gutsy to sweet.
- **THE BOTTOM LINE** The Dean Guitars MD24 Floyd Roasted Maple is a spartan superstrat with big rock tones and a super comfy roasted maple neck that feels next level fast.

GUITAR WORLD GOLD AWARD PERFORMANCE

Love at First Stang

FENDER KURT COBAIN JAG-STANG

By Chris Gill

SOMETIME IN 1993, Fender approached Kurt Cobain about collaborating on the design of a guitar. Cobain was amused but also flattered by the proposal, and he quickly conceived and sketched a new design that combined features of his favorite guitars: a modified 1965 Fender Jaguar and a 1969 Fender Competition Mustang. The Nirvana guitarist called his creation the Jag-Stang. Fender delivered the first Jag-Stang prototype to Cobain in early 1994, and the guitarist used it for a handful of shows that year before he took his own life on April 5, 1994.

Fender produced the Jag-Stang from 1995 through 2005 when it was discontinued, but Fender recently revived the model in commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the release of Nirvana's breakthrough *Nevermind* album. The new version differs just slightly from the original run, but it still offers players seeking Cobain's iconoclastic brand of musical rebellion a tonal palette that stands apart from the crowd.

FEATURES The most distinctive feature of the Kurt Cobain Jag-Stang is its elongated compact offset body shape that's based on a Mustang's upper bout combined with a Jaguar's lower bout. While the original production model had a basswood body, this version's body is made of heftier alder (like a vintage Jaguar and some Sixties Mustangs). Like the original Jag-Stang, the body has no belly or arm rest contours, and it is available with either a Sonic Blue or Fiesta Red finish.

The Jag-Stang's neck is constructed of maple with a rosewood fingerboard. Neck features include a 24-inch Mustang scale length, 22 vintage thin profile frets, 7.25-inch radius, slim C-shape profile and 1.575-inch nut width (slightly wider than the original Jag-Stang's nut). The pickups are a custom Jag-Stang bridge humbucker (7.18k ohm resistance) and custom Jag-Stang neck single-coil (5.73k ohm resistance), which each are wired to separate three-position slider switches with on, off and phase settings as well as master volume and master tone controls. Hardware consists of a Mustang rocker bridge with six barrel saddles, Mustang "dynamic vibrato" tailpiece, vintage-style tuners, Jazz Bass-style knobs and four-ply aged white pearloid pickguard.

PERFORMANCE Although the Jag-Stang has a somewhat compact body like a Mustang as well as a shorter 24-inch scale length, our example was heavier than we expected thanks to its alder body construction. Played in a standing position, the body feels impressively well balanced thanks to the extended lower treble bout, which also contributes to the model's tonal punch and depth by providing additional body mass below the bridge. The large CBS-era-style headstock also enhances the model's tonal range, resulting in surprisingly big sound for a relatively small guitar.

The 24-inch scale results in a slinky feel that makes it easy to perform dramatic string bends. The Jag-Stang ships with .010-.046 gauge strings, but players could use heavier .011 or .012 sets without experiencing uncomfortable string tension. The slim

C neck is exceptionally comfortable as well. One request that Cobain made after receiving the prototype was having belly and armrest contours added, and I wish the Jag-Stang featured that for added comfort.

Although the individual slider switches for each pickup don't facilitate ultra-quick tonal switching during performance, they do offer a wide range of cool and unusual tones. To me, the humbucking bridge/single-coil neck configuration is highly underrated, and here the switches allow users to take advantage of this setup's versatility. The humbucker has a vivid growl that pairs well with a high-gain amp, delivering snappy percussive attack and bristling definition with an aggressive midrange wallop. The neck pickup sounds round and punchy, but it also shines on clean settings where it delivers great tones for funk and blues. The out of phase settings have a snotty, nasal personality that's distinctive and oddly alluring.

CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICE: $1,249.99
MANUFACTURER: Fender, fender.com

- Custom Jag-Stang bridge humbucking and neck single-coil pickups with individual on/off/phase switches provide an impressive variety of tones.
- The 24-inch Mustang scale length allows guitarists to use heavier gauge strings without string bending fatigue.
- **THE BOTTOM LINE:** Resurrected for the 30th anniversary of *Nevermind*, the Kurt Cobain Jag-Stang is ideal for Nirvana fans or anyone who wants to explore their own brand of subversive sounds.

GUITAR WORLD GOLD AWARD PERFORMANCE

Buzz Bin

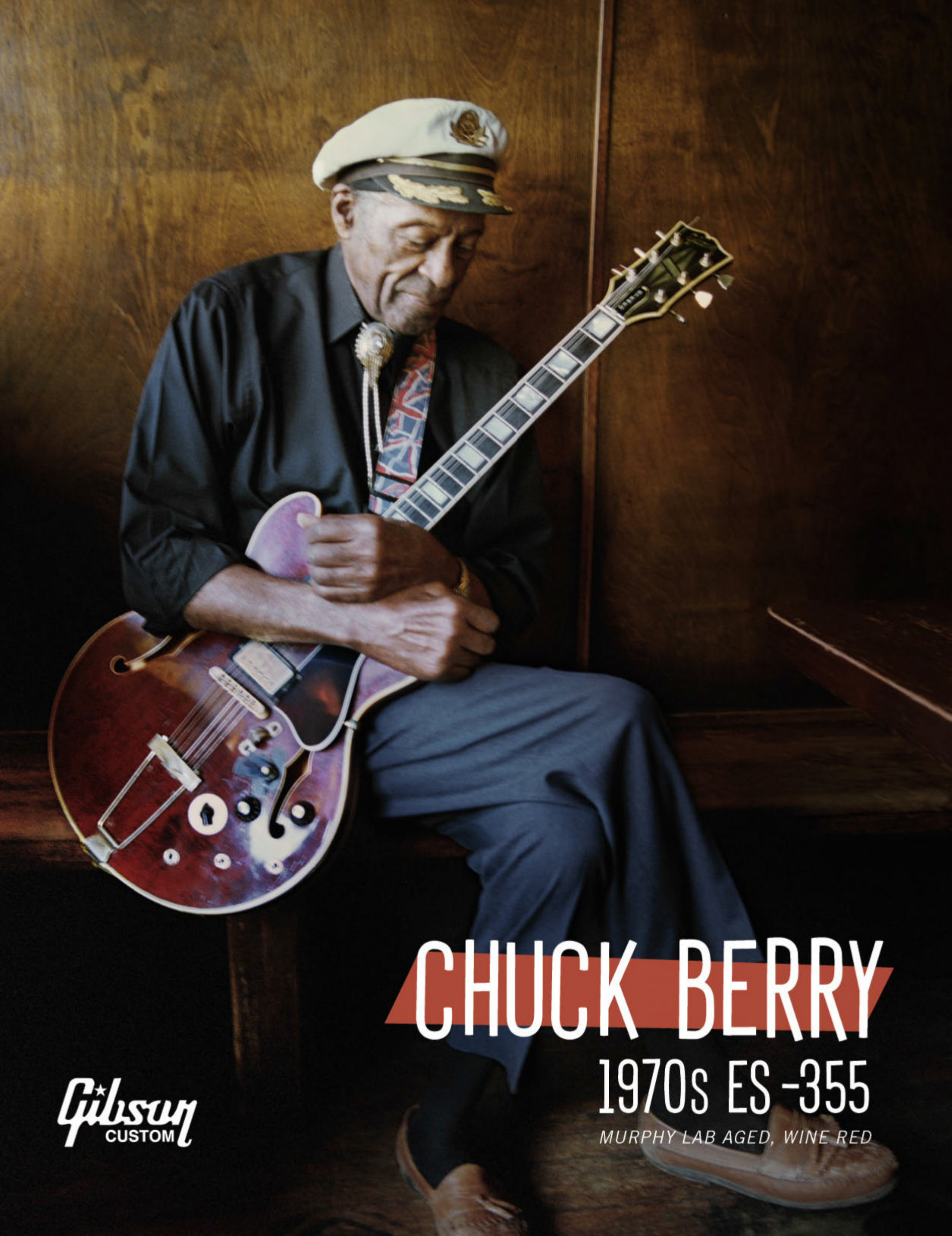
Becos Ziffer Overdrive

THE PERENNIAL OVERDRIVE pedal will never fall victim to obsolescence because piqued demand for new variants based on the evergreen Tube Screamer will always keep it relevant for guitarists. Romanian pedal maker Becos, lauded for their compressor pedals, introduced such a specimen as a signature overdrive for Ratt's hotshot guitar slinger Jordan Ziff. But before you dismiss the Becos TS8-JZ Ziffer Overdrive as yet another TS twin, you should know Becos specializes in cramming multiple tone-sculpting controls onto a mini pedal for an adjustable overdrive that can scream with larger-than-life tone or sweeten with enhanced warmth and clarity.

On its face, the Ziffer Overdrive has the expected controls for Gain, Tone and Level, but it's also upgraded by its three-way gain stage Clip Switch (Classic, Asymmetric, and Custom), a low-end frequency response Deep Switch (Classic and Deep), along with controls for Dry/Wet mix and Dry EQ (a frequency booster and tilting lo/hi EQ). As always, Becos overbuilds for a lifetime of use by using premium components such as audio grade op-amps, Panasonic multi-layer plastic metalized film capacitors and gold-plated tracing circuit boards. And for those who crave more transparency and higher headroom, the pedal can be powered anywhere between 9VDC and 18VDC.

The impetus behind the TS8-JZ was to gently push the front-end of Ziffer's Marshall plexi (or any typical classic amp), and if that's your general purpose, setting the Clip Switch to "Classic" ushers in that TS-808-style squishiness with very little coloration and a dollop of saturated creaminess. As you click the clipping switch down from "Classic" to "Asymmetric" to "Custom," you'll hear gradual bumps in volume and varying shades of gain structure with the overall tone becoming bigger and clearer. With that, if you plan on using the Ziffer Overdrive as a standalone drive, I found that the Custom (LED clipping) setting really boosts notes and chords with boldness and dynamic cut. Whether I'm pushing a cranked amp or stacking the TS8-JZ with another drive stompbox, I believe most players will love the responsive slice of the Asymmetric setting with its perfect blend of bumped-up articulation and sweetened compression. The Deep switch is fascinating to me; if I'm soloing or chugging in the lower register, then the "Deep" setting clearly makes the bottom end more defined and present; however, I still prefer the Classic setting for all the sugary harmonic content I'm used to. The Dry EQ works well if you need to recover some missing frequencies, but don't completely disregard the Dry/Wet mix control. I can tell you dialing back the wetness for some clean signal sounded exceptionally good through a high gain amp. For all its expanded versatility as an 808-style drive, the Ziffer Overdrive shouldn't be missed. — *Paul Riario*

STREET PRICE: $169
MANUFACTURER: Becos, becosfx.com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IN DEEP

by Andy Aledort

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DREAMS TO REMEMBER

Soloing over a two-chord vamp, à la the Allman Brothers' "Dreams"

THE ALLMAN BROTHERS Band created a timeless catalogue of incredible music that has inspired musicians of every genre for over 50 years. A cornerstone of the group's groundbreaking style is the creative improvisational mastery of its two brilliant founding guitarists, Dickey Betts and Duane Allman. While sharing similar musical influences that include elements of blues, rock, country and jazz, both players have unique, immediately recognizable styles. Many aspiring guitarists over the last 50 years have benefitted immensely from listening to these two legendary musicians.

The ABB crafted their music in ways that laid various foundations for group improvisation, with many songs extending beyond 10 minutes in order to allow each soloist the widest path imaginable for creative musical invention. One song that epitomizes this approach is "Dreams," written by vocalist and organist Gregg Allman and originally recorded for the band's 1969 eponymous debut. Duane's guitar solo on this studio track, one in which he switches to slide guitar midway through, is regarded by many as one of his all-time greatest solos and is "required listening/learning" for any serious guitar player. There are a few fantastic live versions to check out as well.

The solo section of "Dreams" is based on a two-chord vamp, C/D to D, played in $\frac{6}{8}$ meter, with each chord played for one bar, resulting in a repeating two-bar progression. **FIGURE 1** illustrates a 5th-string root D barre chord and the C/D chord, which is sounded by barring the index finger across the middle four strings at the 5th fret.

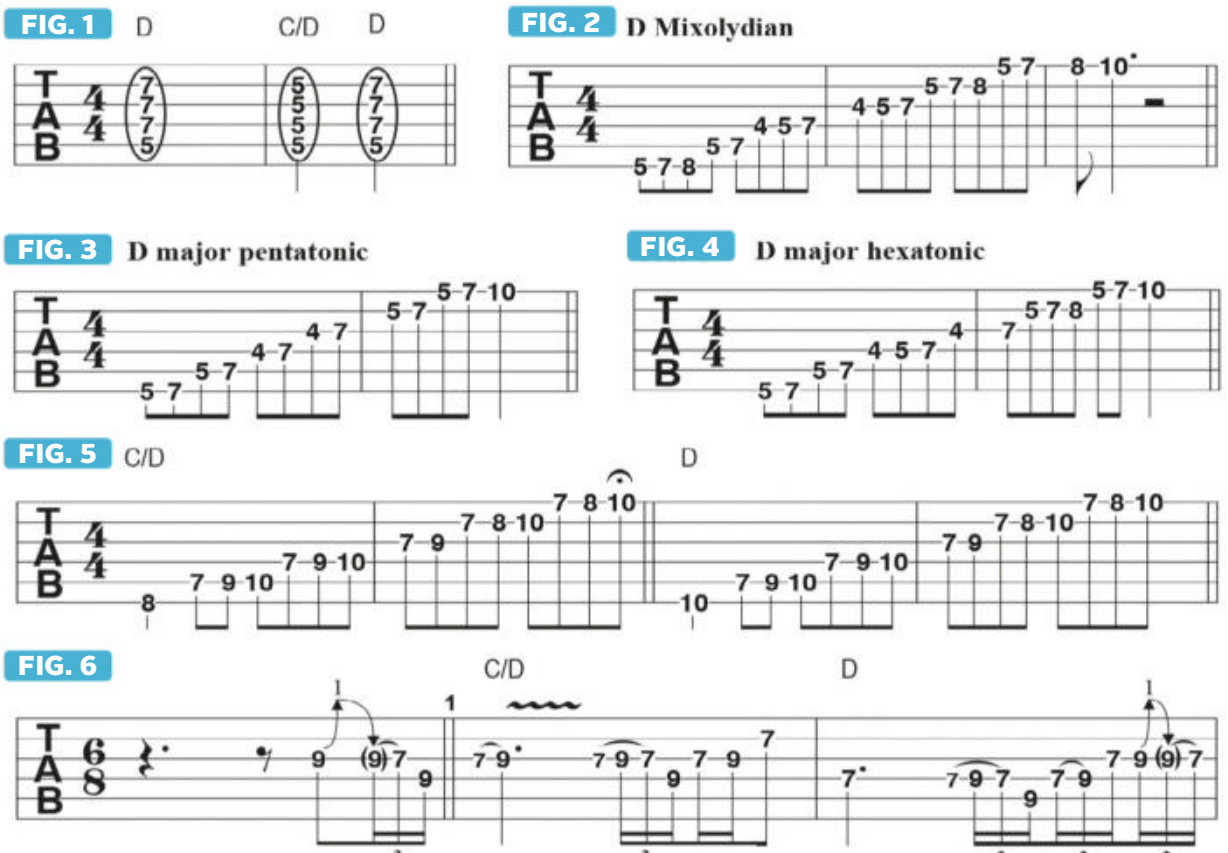
The scale that works best over both chords is D Mixolydian (D, E, F♯, G, A, B, C), illustrated in **FIGURE 2**. As you can see, the scale includes the chord tones of C/D (D, G, C, E) and D (D, F♯, A). When soloing, Duane will often "abbreviate" D Mixolydian to D major pentatonic (D, E, F♯, A, B), shown in **FIGURE 3**, or D major hexatonic (D, E, F♯, G, A, B), depicted in **FIGURE 4**.

An interesting thing that happens when playing D Mixolydian over C/D is that the notes F♯ and B represent, respectively, the ♯11 (sharp 11th) and maj7 (major seventh) relative to the C major triad within the chord structure. When played over the D chord that follows, these two notes "resolve to," or become, that chord's major 3rd, F♯, and major 6th, B. **FIGURE 5** shows D Mixolydian when played over both C and D root notes.

FIGURE 6 offers a 10-bar solo played over the repeating two-bar "Dreams" vamp.

When playing over C/D, I make a point of emphasizing the chord tones of C major — C, E, G. When playing over D, I emphasize the D major chord tones — D, F♯ and A. The "trick, or "riddle," is to play spontaneous lines that reference each chord in a musical way while also telling a captivating musical story that unfolds as the solo develops.

Next month, we'll look at more soloing ideas for this "Dreams"-style progression.



***Guitar World* Associate Editor Andy Aledort is recognized worldwide for his vast contributions to guitar instruction, via his many best-selling instructional DVDs, transcription books and online lessons.**

THE GRISTLE REPORT

by Greg Koch

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/january2022

DARK SIDE OF THE GRISTLE

How to play the harmonically intricate "Mean Streak"

MANY YEARS AGO, I had a band called Greg Koch and the Tone Controls, and in 1993 we released our first album, eponymously named. The music that we played was primarily blues-based, but we generally tried to push the ball down the field a little bit by adding some unusual, unexpected chord changes and harmonic devices. A good example is the song "Mean Streak," which will be the focus of this lesson.

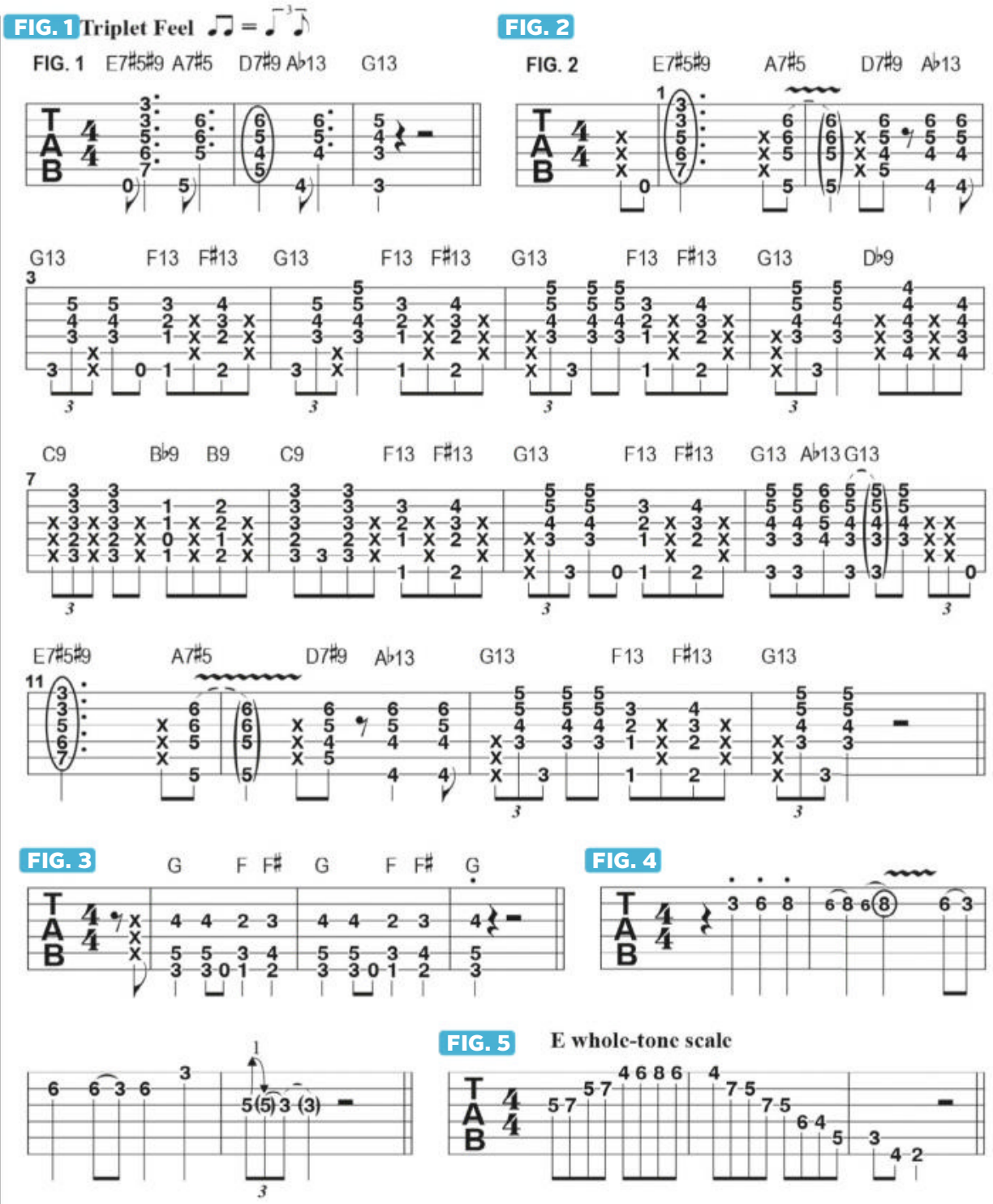
"Mean Streak" is a funk shuffle in the key of G that stays within the "blues changes" parameters before venturing into a more unusual and harmonically challenging turnaround, as shown in **FIGURE 1**. Across this two-bar phrase, I begin with E7♯9♯5, voiced with a wide stretch that spans the 3rd-to-7th frets, followed by A7♯5 - D7♯9 - A♭13. As you can see, a high F note resides at the top of these last three chords, serving as a *common tone* while the inherent harmony develops underneath it.

In **FIGURE 2**, I demonstrate how this turnaround functions within the structure of the tune across the full 14-bar form. Following the turnaround, the song settles into a shuffle groove that essentially moves from the I (one) chord, G13 — which I embellish with a repeating chromatic ascent, from F13 to F♯13 to G13 — to the IV (four) chord, C9 (more chromaticism included via the D♭9 - C9 descent, as well as the B♭9 - B9 - C9 ascent), followed by a return to F13 - F♯13 - G13 and then a restatement of the turnaround.

Combining the shuffle groove with the eighth-note syncopations and the chromatic accent of F - F♯ - G is something I picked up from the classic John Mayall tune "Suspicions, Pt 2," which I discovered via a great compilation album, *Looking Back*, that was released way back in 1969. (Definitely check out this essential album!) **FIGURE 3** illustrates a rhythm part along the lines of "Suspicions, Pt 2," and **FIGURE 4** represents a similar melodic line played over the basic groove.

I "funked up" the approach here by expanding the basic dominant 7th chords to 13ths. When fretting these grips, I'll often hook my thumb over the top side of the neck to fret the 6th-string root notes. If this unconventional technique feels uncomfortable or arduous, you can of course form the chords in the normal way, with the index finger fretting all 6th-string roots.

When soloing over the "bluesy" part of the tune, I'll generally rely on typical minor pentatonic-, blues scale- or Mixolydian-based phrases. However, when soloing over the turnaround, the more-complex inherent harmony invites a broader scope for note choices. There are, of course, many different options one can take (which we will explore in depth in another column), but one tried-and-true approach is to play the E whole-tone scale (E, F♯, G♯, B♭, C, D) over all of the chords. Although some of the notes may clash a bit with specific chord tones across the progression, I find that the ear "accepts" this twisted angle, if you can devise effective ways to make it work. For me, there are virtually an endless variety of ways to travel through whole-tone ideas, so I encourage you to check out this multi-purpose scale.



Greg Koch is a large human who coaxes guitars into submission in a way that has left an indelible print on the psyches of many Earth dwellers. Visit GregKoch.com to check out his recordings, instructional materials, signature musical devices and colorful hats.

TOM NOVIK

MELODIC MUSE

by Andy Timmons

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/january2022

THEMATIC DEVELOPMENT

Devising thematically-based improvised solos over "Cry for You"

"CRY FOR YOU" is a song that I originally wrote and recorded for my 1994 album, *Ear X-Tacy*, and it has remained a staple of my live shows for all these years. I love playing this song every night! It's in D minor — "the saddest of all keys," as Nigel Tufnel from Spinal Tap would say. While it is based on a fairly common chord progression — Dm - B♭ - Gm - A7 — it does lend itself to a lot of opportunities for musical expression.

Once you become aware of what notes sound good over this progression, such as what scales you can rely on or nice melodic "shapes" that lend themselves well to the song's harmony and its feeling, the "riddle," as it were, is, as always, "How do I make music out of this?" A key approach for me is one of *thematic development*: how to craft a musical statement and then allow that statement to grow from there.

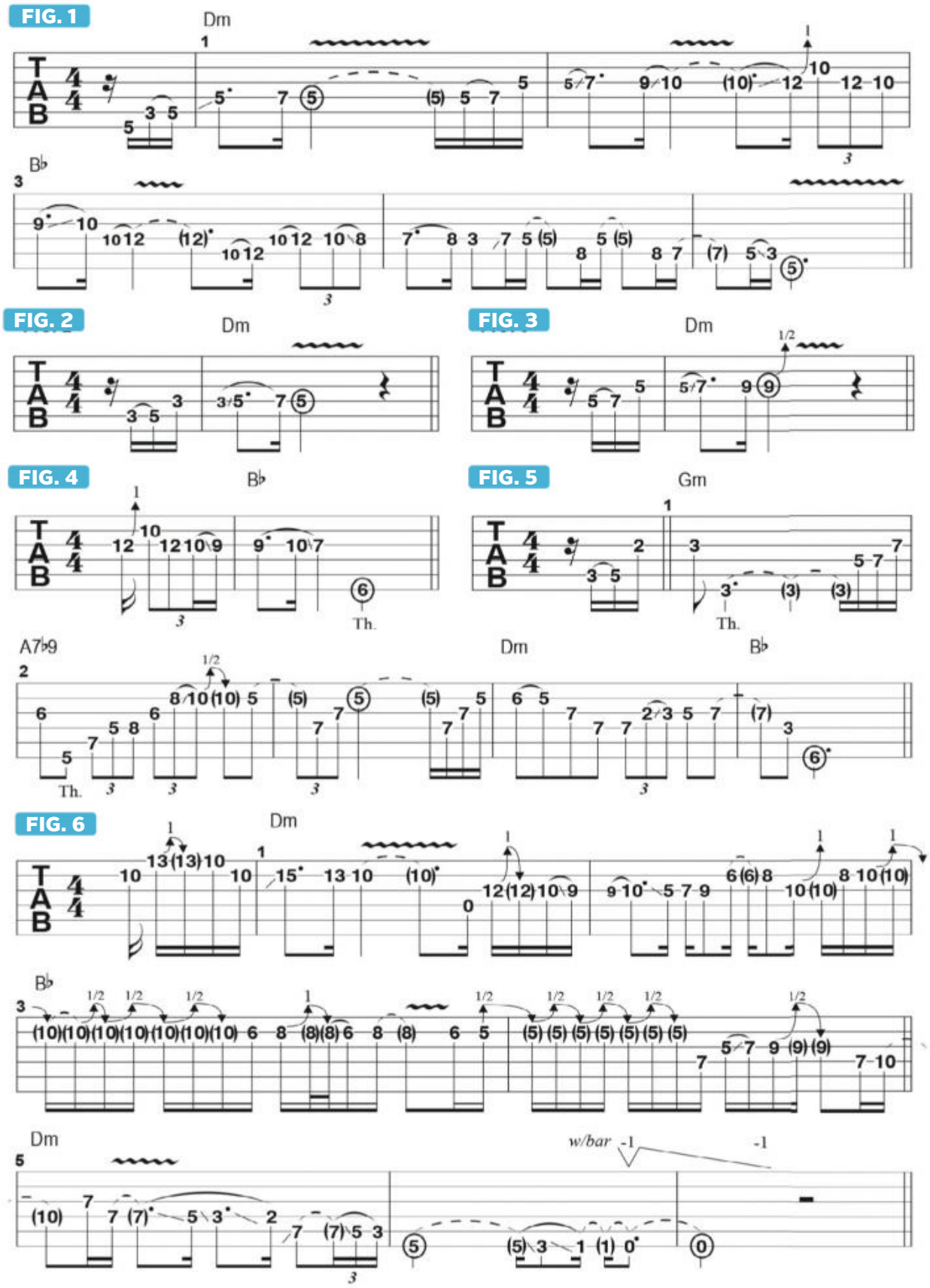
FIGURE 1 illustrates a four-bar improvised solo over the Dm - B♭ portion of the progression, with two bars on Dm and two bars on B♭. When I'm soloing, part of my mind is imagining, "What do I want to hear?," almost as if someone else is playing. This way, I maintain an awareness of how the music *feels* to the listener. In bar 1, I introduce a three-note melodic shape of G-A-G, with the G note functioning as the 4th over the Dm chord, shown in **FIGURE 2**.

Once that rhythmic convention is established, I maintain it with the use of other melodic notes through the reminder of the five-bar solo, utilizing D-E-F in bar 2, as shown in **FIGURE 3**, E-F-D in bar 3 (see **FIGURE 4**) and A-B♭-F in bar 4. These phrases function in a "question-and-answer" type of way, where we've got "A," the initial statement, followed by "B," the response, then "C," the reaction to A and B, etc. In this way, the rhythmic content of the solo is of equal importance as the notes that I choose to play, as the combination of rhythm and melody provides a "hook" to draw the listener in.

In **FIGURE 5**, I demonstrate how I might continue along this "theme" while playing over the subsequent Gm and A7♭9 chords. Notice that while I maintain a similar rhythmic syncopation to the phrases, my note choices instantly describe each chord as it arrives via emphasis on its tones. Over Gm, the chord tones are G, B♭ and D. Over A7♭9, the chord tones are A, C♯, E, G and B♭.

FIGURE 6 presents another improvised solo played over the Dm - B♭ changes, this time seven bars in length. I begin with an entirely different melodic idea that serves to introduce a new musical story that will unfold through the subsequent melodic lines.

Now that you have the idea, record a Dm - B♭ - Gm - A7♭9 backing track and try improvising a solo of your own that utilizes these melodic-harmonic-rhythmic concepts.



Andy Timmons is a world-renowned guitarist known for his work with the Andy Timmons Band, as well as Danger Danger and Simon Phillips. Visit andytimmons.com and guitarxperience.net to check out his recordings and many instructional releases

SIMONE CECHETTI

ALL EARS
by Jake Bowen of Periphery

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/january2022

SONIC TAPESTRY

Layering multiple guitar parts to create a lush musical soundscape

HELLO, AND WELCOME to my new *Guitar World* instructional column! In this series of articles, I'd like to share some of my ear-guided approaches to creating music, which the magazine's editors have kindly helped me put to paper. For this first lesson, I'd like to present an example of a compositional approach that I use in both Periphery and my solo projects: layering arpeggios to create broad, lush-sounding musical soundscapes.

The music I composed for this first column was written specifically for this lesson and comprises four different clean-tone electric guitar parts that are joined by two supporting instruments, all of which you'll hear in the accompanying video. I will break down this piece of music layer by layer to demonstrate how small, concise musical ideas can be combined to create a big, full sound. The tuning I'm using here is "drop-C," or drop-D, down one whole step (low to high: C, G, C, F, A, D), so everything sounds a whole step lower than written.

The first musical layer, or Gtr. 1 part, functions as the foundation of the piece and is made up of the four chords illustrated in **FIGURE 1**: Bm(add9), Em7, Gmaj9 and Dmaj7. For most of these chords, I'm using a "spread" voicing, with wide intervals and notes played on non-adjacent strings. These chord shapes are often called "shell voicings" because they are sparsely structured and include only the essential "color" tones.

All of the layered guitar parts here are treated with delay and reverb. The delay is set to a dotted quarter-note rhythm, relative to the tempo of the piece, which is 120 BPM (beats per minute). The reverb is a long-tail hall reverb effect, with the "wetness" level set to 50 percent.

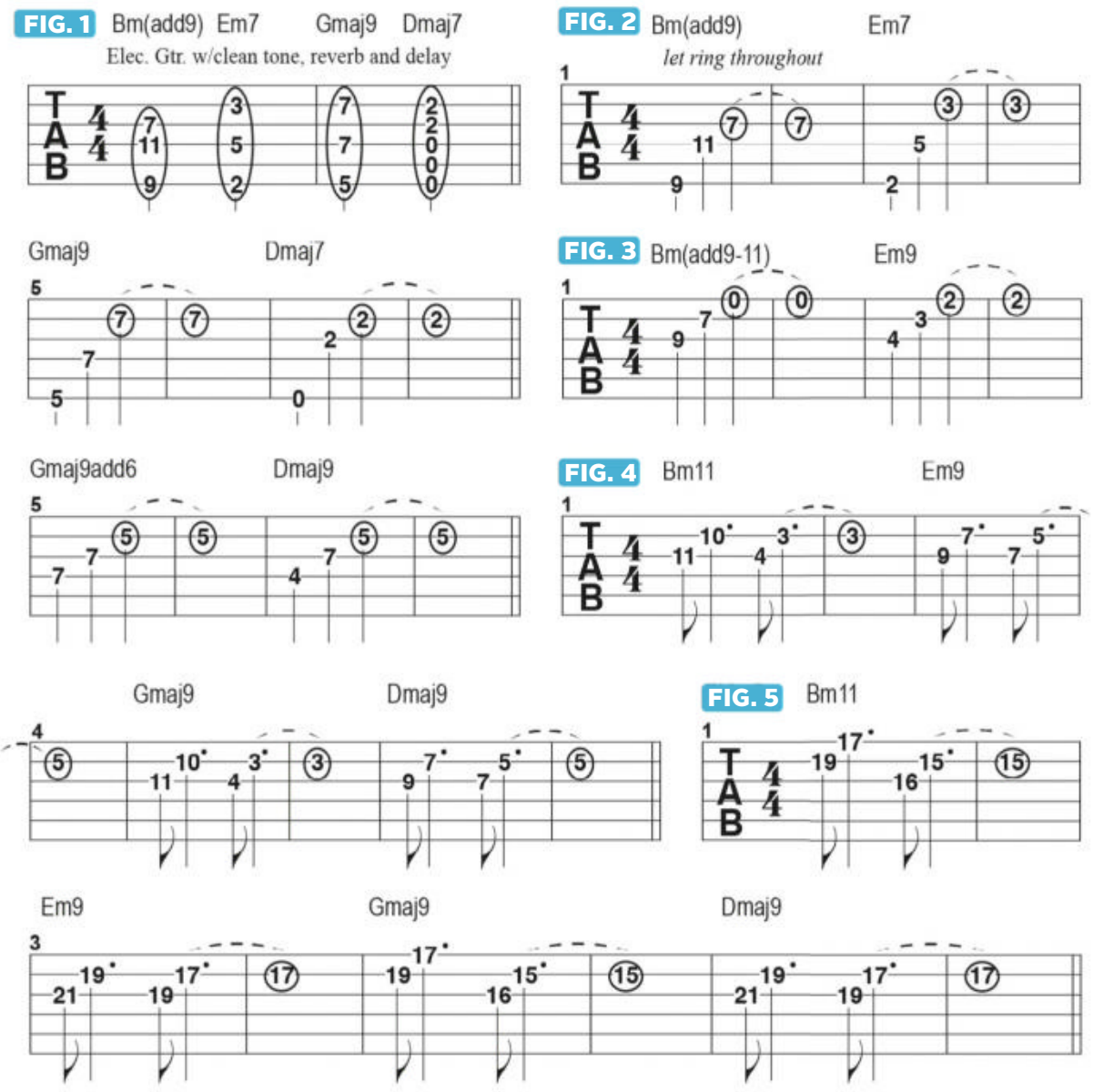
FIGURE 2 illustrates how the Gtr. 1 part is played: each chord in the progression is arpeggiated and held for two bars, as the notes are allowed to ring together. As I mentioned earlier, these chord voicings include some wide intervals — meaning a 5th or larger. As I overdubbed additional guitar parts, I chose to voice their notes closer together and in a higher register, resulting in a seamless interweaving of guitars. I find that using smaller, tighter voicings on additional guitar parts serves to leave ample sonic room for each newly added part.

FIGURE 3 depicts the Gtr. 2 part. Over the foundational Bm(add9) chord, I play the notes E and F♯, which are a whole step apart. Over Em7, I play B, D and F♯, which are 3rds apart. Over Gmaj9, I play A, D and E, stacking a 2nd on top of a 4th. Over Dmaj7, I play F♯, D and E, which is a 2nd on top of a 6th.

FIGURE 4 presents our next layer, the Gtr. 3 part, which is played in a syncopated rhythm that provides both added rhythmic and melodic-harmonic interest. The notes in this part are either 2nds or 3rds apart. Notice how the overall harmony, with the added notes, has now become denser and richer, as reflected by the increasingly complex chord names. Finally, the Gtr. 4 part, shown in **FIGURE 5**, simply doubles the Gtr. 3 part an octave higher.

As a finishing touch, to these four guitar parts I added a piano and a celeste, which serve to reinforce the harmony while widening the timbral palette. These parts are treated with the same delay and reverb settings that I used for the guitars, so that everything "agrees" and meshes together well. When all the parts are put together, the result is an expansive sound that's filled with unusual and unexpected slap-back effects.

This is but one example of some of the creative "orchestral" approaches to composition that I'll take to create broad soundscapes, via the use of contrapuntal guitar parts, various tones and effects and other, supporting instruments.



Jake Bowen is a key member of the guitar triumvirate in the critically acclaimed prog metal band Periphery, whose next studio album will be released in early 2022. His new solo album, *The Daily Sun*, is out now.

EKATERINA GORBACHEVA

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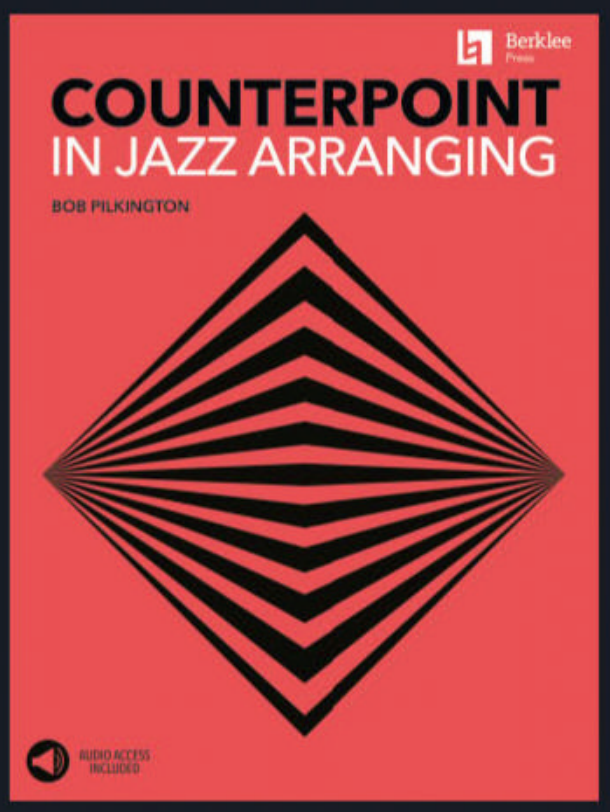

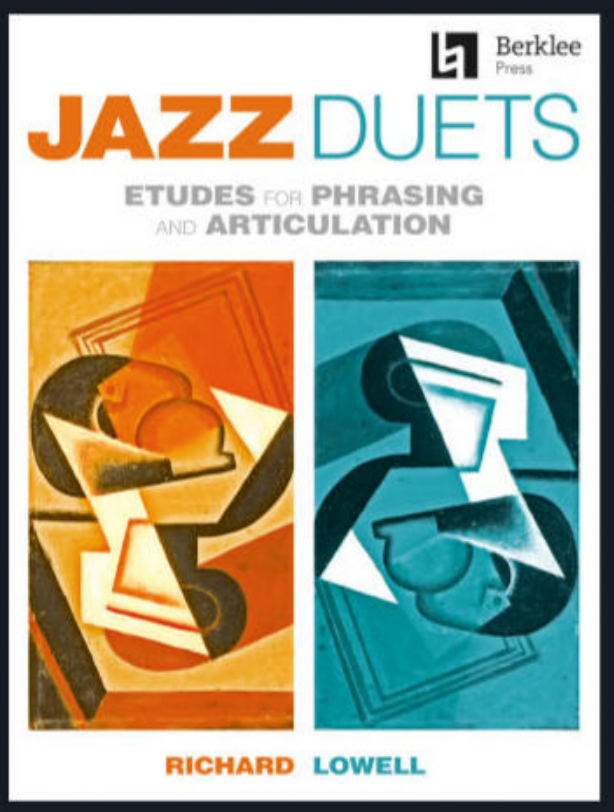

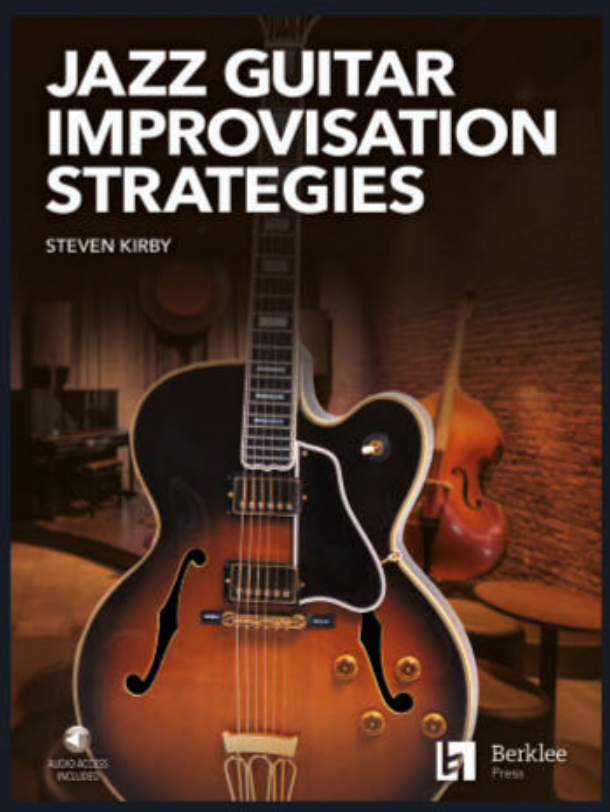

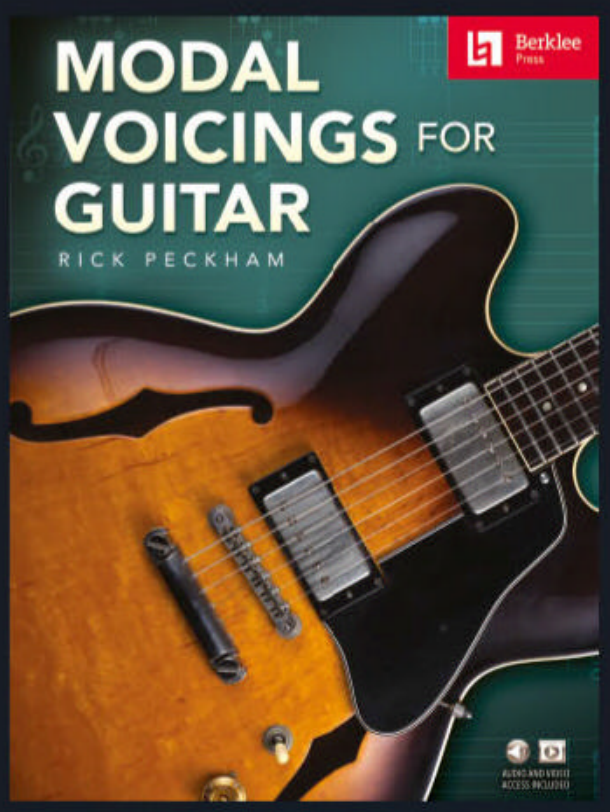

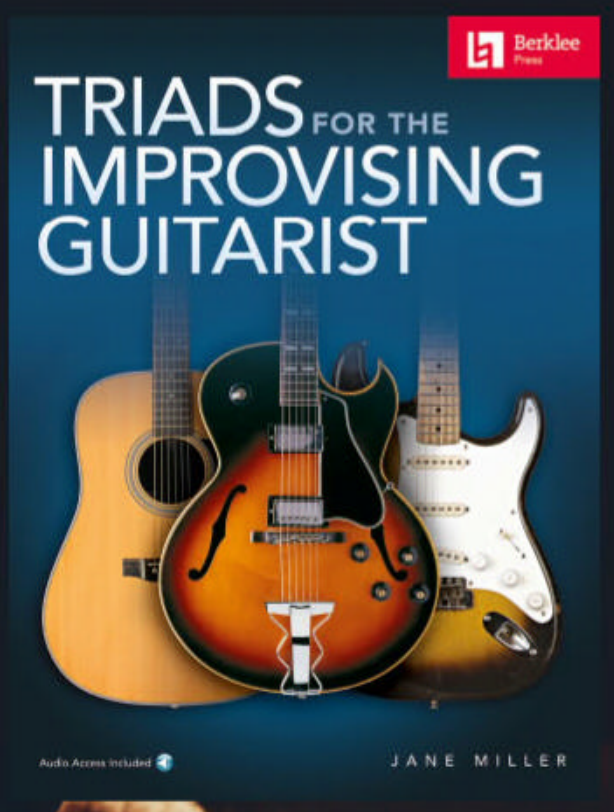

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Performance Notes

HOW TO PLAY THIS MONTH'S SONGS **By Jimmy Brown**

"MR. BRIGHTSIDE"
The Killers

THIS ETERNALLY FUN power-pop anthem from the early 2000s kicks off with a super-catchy, cleverly crafted intro and verse riff (see *Rhy. Fig. 1*, bars 1-4), compliments of guitarist Dave Keuning. Combining highly unusual "pretzel-finger" chord grips played way up high on the fretboard with an eighth-note arpeggiation pattern that incorporates the open high E string, the guitarist creates a sequence of sparkly "cluster" voicings via the technique of *crosspicking*, switching to a different string with each successive note, as one would do when fingerpicking.

This is actually a very challenging part to play for the fret hand! Looking at the chord frames at the beginning of the transcription, you'll see that Keuning employs all four fingers and four- and five-fret stretches for these voicings, as well as for the sprawling G6 chord voicing that he uses later on in the song, during the pre-chorus (see *Rhy. Fig. 2*, bars 21-24). Your fingers will need to be warmed-up and limber to make these stretches, and using light-gauge strings and having low action on your guitar will certainly help make playing the song easier.

If you're having a tough time playing all the notes of each arpeggiated chord and letting them ring cleanly, I suggest either omitting the fretted high E notes on the B string's 17th fret (picking the open E twice instead) or letting go of the lowest note of each shape right after you pick it, which will buy you some much needed reach and free up a finger that can then hop over to fret one of the higher notes. You'll lose a little bit of the overall sustain, but that's not too bad, as the low note does momentarily linger in our mind's ear. And the bass guitar, entering in bar 5, proceeds to double those low notes one and then two octaves down anyway.

This same advice applies to the aforementioned sprawling G6 chord in the pre-chorus. Using some extra reverb will help with the note sustain too, by the way.

Regarding the right hand, you'll notice that we've included suggested picking strokes for the first four bars. Proceed slowly at first, striving for clean articulation and small, economical movements with both hands.

"STATESBORO BLUES"
The Allman Brothers Band

ONE OF THE Allman Brothers' most celebrated live performances, from NYC's Fillmore East theater in March 1971, this classic recording features the band's original guitarists Duane Allman and Dickey Betts in one of their finest moments together, stretching out with perfectly tasteful solos and Duane playing soulful slide licks in open E tuning. Both guitarists had achieved tonal nirvana that night, with their Gibson SG and Les Paul axes plugged straight into cranked Marshall "plexi" tube amps.

For most of his slide licks throughout the song, Duane employed the tried-and-true open-tuning approach of playing around a single-fret chord shape, specifically sticking primarily around the D shape at the 10th fret and adding melodic non-chord tones two frets below, swooping down to the 8th fret and back in a sort of zig-zagging manner. In his second 12-bar solo chorus (see section E), the guitarist took this same approach up an octave, to the 22nd and 20th frets, respectively, building up to an exciting high-pitched musical climax. It's interesting to note that Duane chose to stick with these shapes whenever the progression moved to the IV (four) chord, G, and the V (five) chord, A, as opposed to "chasing" these chords down to the 5th and 7th frets, respectively, or up to the 15th and 17th frets, which would be the more obvious approach that a less seasoned slide player would take, so as to "play it safe" with their note choices.

Dickey's solo, beginning at section G, features the guitarist starting out with his signature melodic approach, using notes from the D major pentatonic scale and masterfully bending them to sweetly agree with the chords. Notice how, when the progression moves to the IV chord (G) in bar 85, Betts deliberately limits his bend from E up to only a half step (to F), so as to not play an F♯ over that chord, which would be a clashing major 7th. For his second chorus (see section H), Dickey gets more "serious," moving into a higher register (as Duane had done in his solo) and now drawing notes primarily from the parallel D minor pentatonic scale, bending up to and shaking the high A note with great passion.

"THE SAILS OF CHARON"
Scorpions

FEATURING ONE OF metal's early shred masters and heros, Uli Jon Roth, this classic late-70s Scorpions track showcases the technically brilliant and highly musical guitarist stretching out on his flamenco-inspired composition with an ambitious intro solo and taking a neo-classical, outline-the-chord changes approach to crafting sweetly singing cello/violin-like melodies. Uli built the song around the C Phrygian-dominant mode (C, D♭, E, F, G, A♭, B♭) which is the fifth mode of F harmonic minor (F, G, A♭, B♭, C, D♭, E) and has a characteristically dramatic and exotic flavor, one which many of the great European classical and flamenco composers have utilized to great effect for centuries. In this case, all the instruments are tuned down one half step, so everything sounds a half step lower than written, in the key and modality of B Phrygian-dominant.

It's interesting that Uli chose to play the song's opening theme entirely on the A string, using a series of quick position shifts and expressive finger slides, resulting in a consistent, cello-like timbre. There's no obvious fingering choice here, so you'll need to experiment to find what fingerings best facilitate playing the quick, descending 16th notes. For the recurring long slides from the 3rd fret up to the 15th, you may want to actually use your pinkie, as that will ideally pre-position your other fingers to play the aforementioned 16th notes that follow.

Uli's intro guitar solo, beginning at section C, offers a virtual Blackmore- and Yngwie-approved master class in neo-classical shred guitar virtuosity, with long passages of fluent 16th-note triplets, string skipping and diminished-7 arpeggios that serve as highly informative and entertaining exercises. Notice how, from bars 22 to 35, Uli employs hammer-ons and pull-offs in his fast runs. Make sure your hammer-ons are firm and clean, and when pulling-off, pluck the string slightly downward, to give the lower note added volume, approaching that of the picked note. A bright, overdriven tone will help. Uli used a "parked" wah pedal as a filter for his leads on this track, à la Boston's Tom Scholz, offering a great example of "chasing tone" resourcefully.

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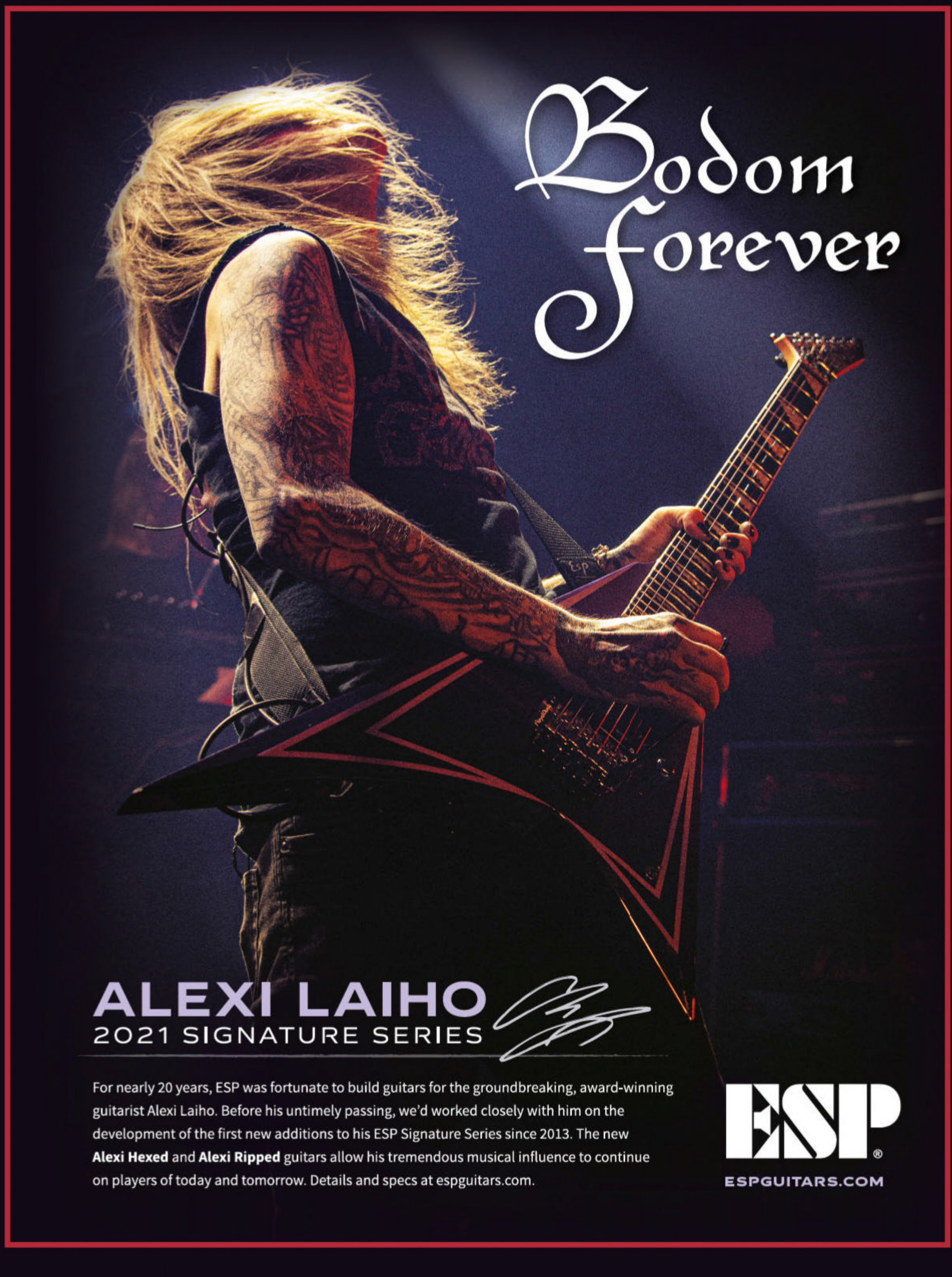
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"MR. BRIGHTSIDE"

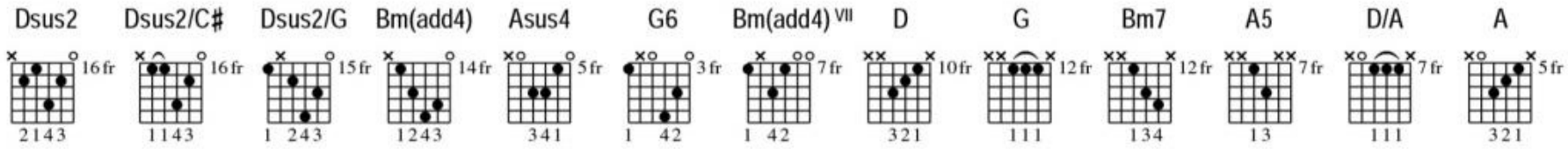
The Killers

As heard on **HOT FUSS**

Words and Music by BRANDON FLOWERS, DAVE KEUNING, MARK STOERMER *and* RONNIE VANNUCCI • *Transcribed by* JEFF PERRIN

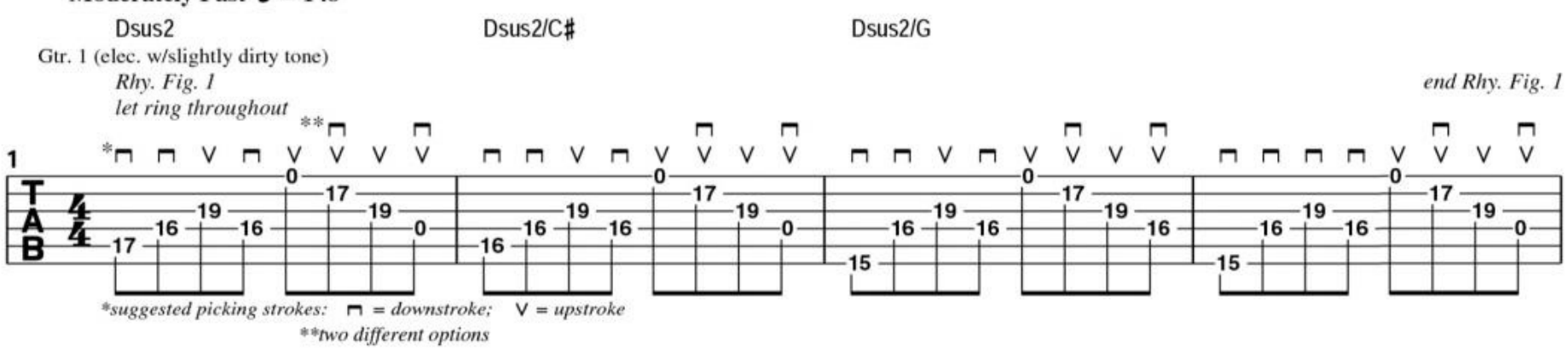
All guitars are tuned down one half step (low to high: E♭ A♭ D♭ G♭ B♭ E♭).
Bass tuning (low to high): E♭ A♭ D♭ G♭.

All notes and chords sound one half step lower than written (key of D♭).

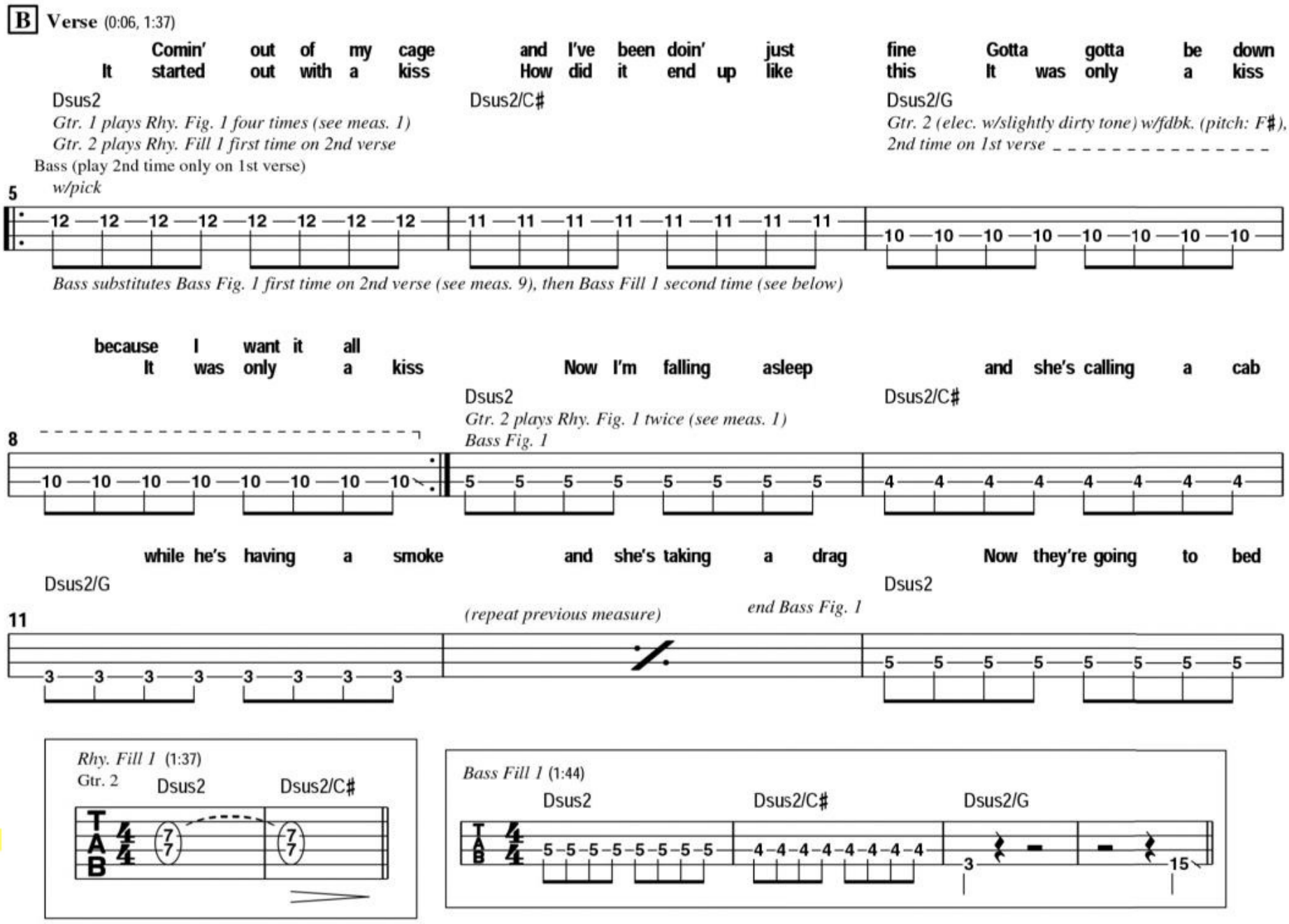


A **Intro** (0:00)

Moderately Fast ♩ = 148



B **Verse** (0:06, 1:37)



"MR. BRIGHTSIDE"
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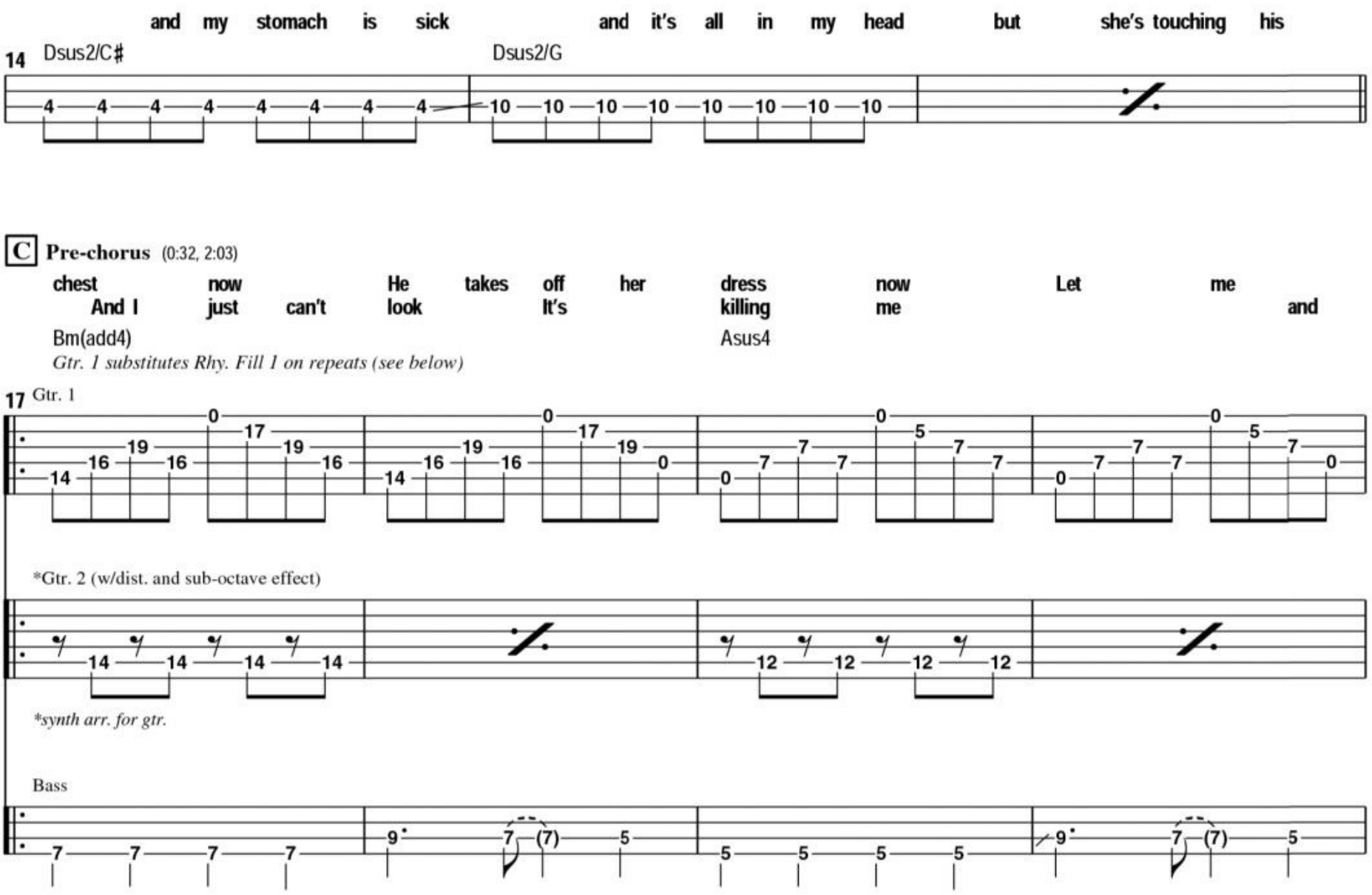
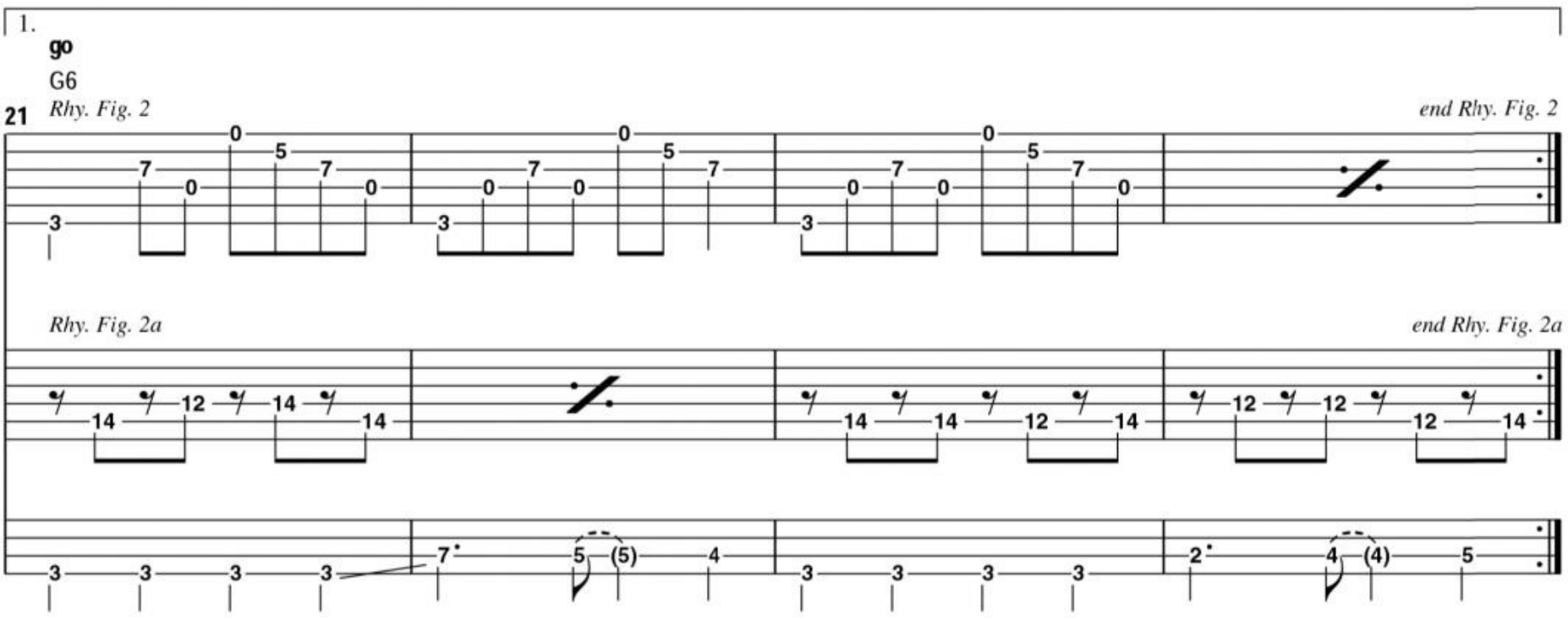
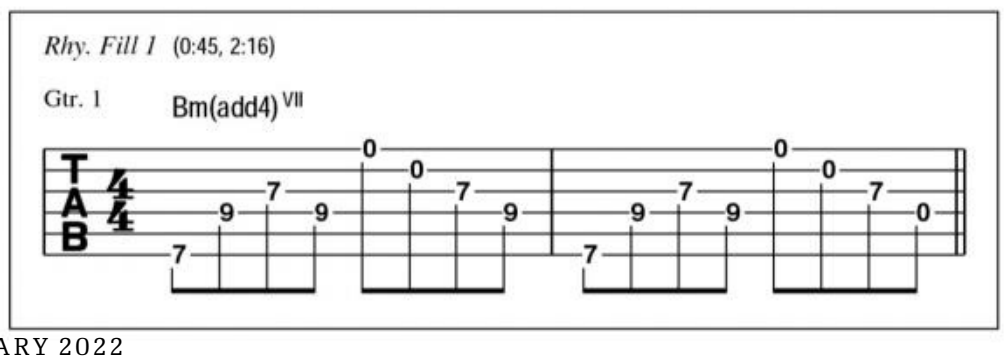

and my stomach is sick and it's all in my head but she's touching his
14
Dsus2/C♯
Dsus2/G
C Pre-chorus (0:32, 2:03)
chest now He takes off her dress now Let me
And I just can't look It's killing me and
Bm(add4)
Asus4
Gtr. 1 substitutes Rhy. Fill 1 on repeats (see below)
17
Gtr. 1
*Gtr. 2 (w/dist. and sub-octave effect)
*synth arr. for gtr.
Bass


1.
go
G6
21
Rhy. Fig. 2
end Rhy. Fig. 2
Rhy. Fig. 2a
end Rhy. Fig. 2a


Rhy. Fill 1 (0:45, 2:16)
Gtr. 1
Bm(add4) VII

2.

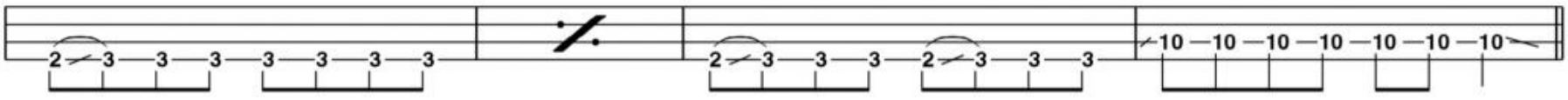
taking **control**

G6

Gtr. 1 repeats Rhy. Fig. 2 (see meas. 21)

Gtr. 2 repeats Rhy. Fig. 2a (see meas. 21)

25 Bass



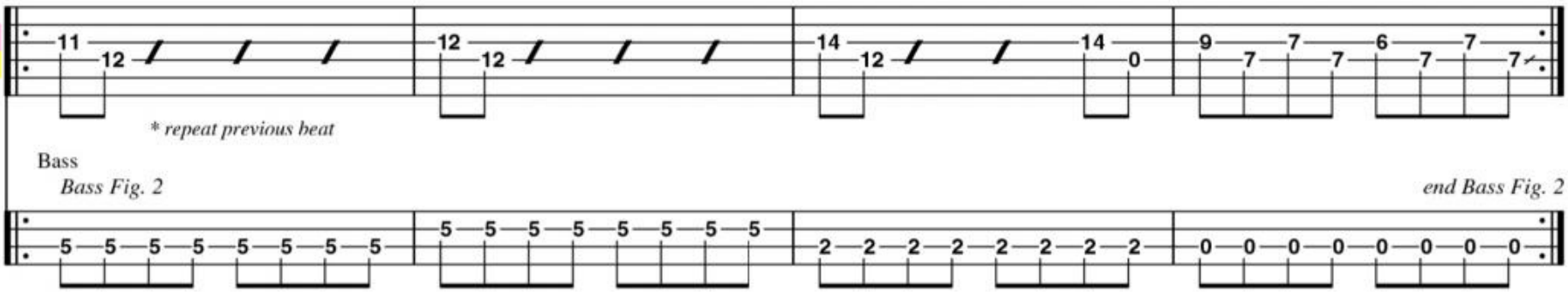
D **Chorus** (0:58, 2:29)

Jealousy **turning** **saints** **into** **the sea** **Turning** **through** **sick**
lullabies **choking** **on** **your** **alibis** **But** **it's** **just** **the**

N.C.(D) (G5) (Bm7) (A)

Gtrs. 1 and 2 (sub-octave effect off)

29



* *repeat previous beat*

Bass

Bass Fig. 2 *end Bass Fig. 2*

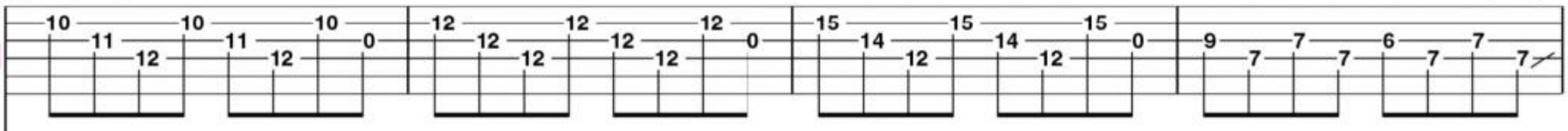
price **I** **pay** **Destiny** **is** **calling** **me** **Open** **up** **my**

D G Bm7 (A)

Gtr. 1

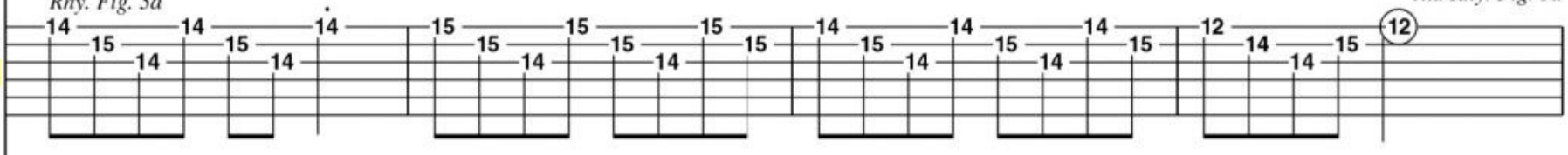
Rhy. Fig. 3 *end Rhy. Fig. 3*

33



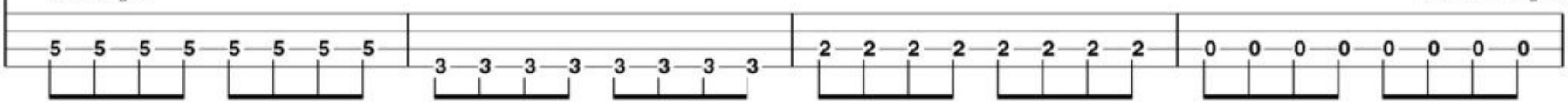
Gtr. 2

Rhy. Fig. 3a *end Rhy. Fig. 3a*



Bass

Bass Fig. 3 *end Bass Fig. 3*



(2nd time) skip ahead to interlude **F**

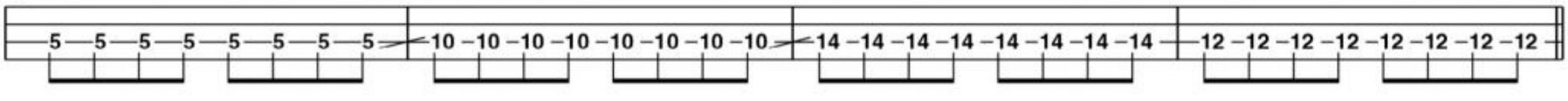
eager **eyes** **'cause** **I'm** **Mister** **Brightside**

D G Bm7 (A)

Gtr. 1 repeats Rhy. Fig. 3 (see meas. 33)

Gtr. 2 repeats Rhy. Fig. 3a (see meas. 33)

37 Bass

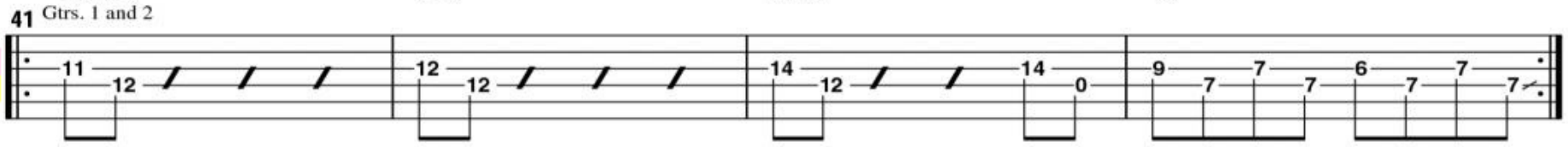


E (1:24)

(2nd time) go back to verse **B**

N.C.(D) (G5) (Bm7) (A)

41 Gtrs. 1 and 2



Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 twice (see meas. 29)

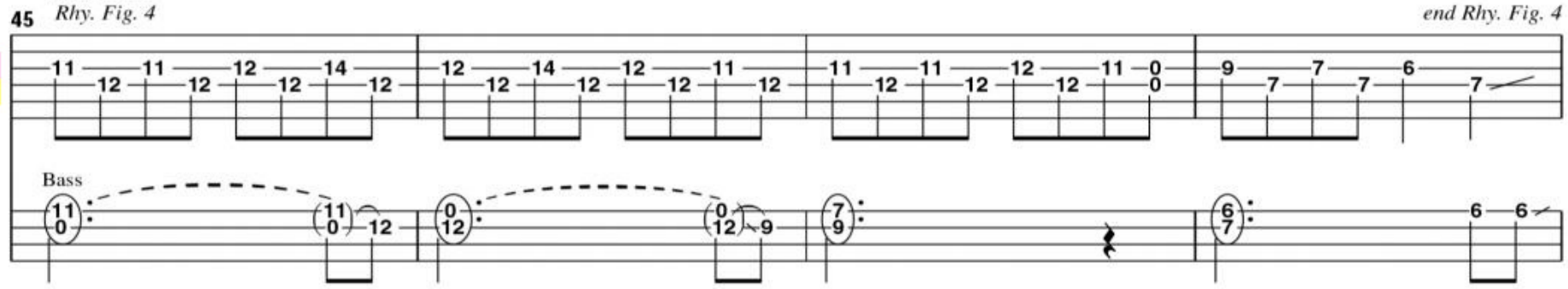
F **Interlude** (2:55)

(D) (G5) (Bm) (A)

Gtrs. 1 and 2

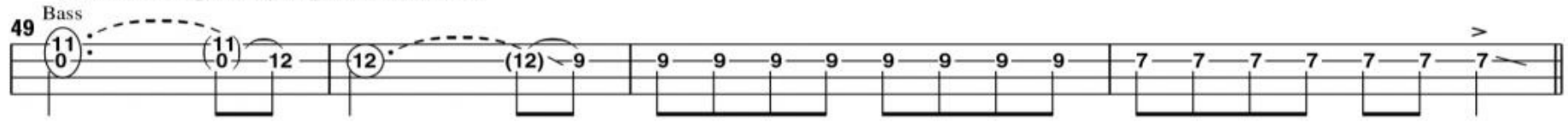
45 *Rhy. Fig. 4*

end Rhy. Fig. 4



(D) (G5) (Bm) (A)

Gtrs. 1 and 2 repeat Rhy. Fig. 4 (see meas. 45)



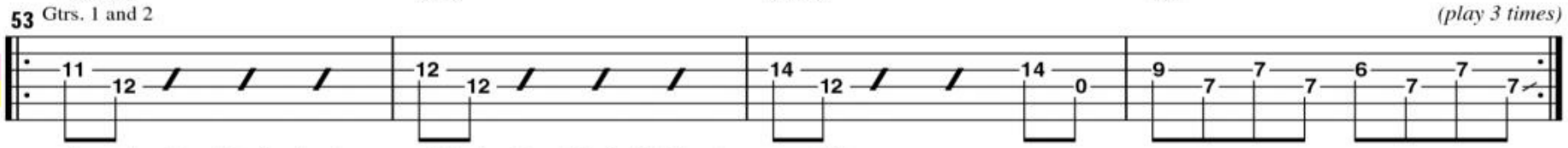
G **Outro** (3:08)

never

N.C.(D) (G5) (Bm7) (A)

53 Gtrs. 1 and 2

(play 3 times)



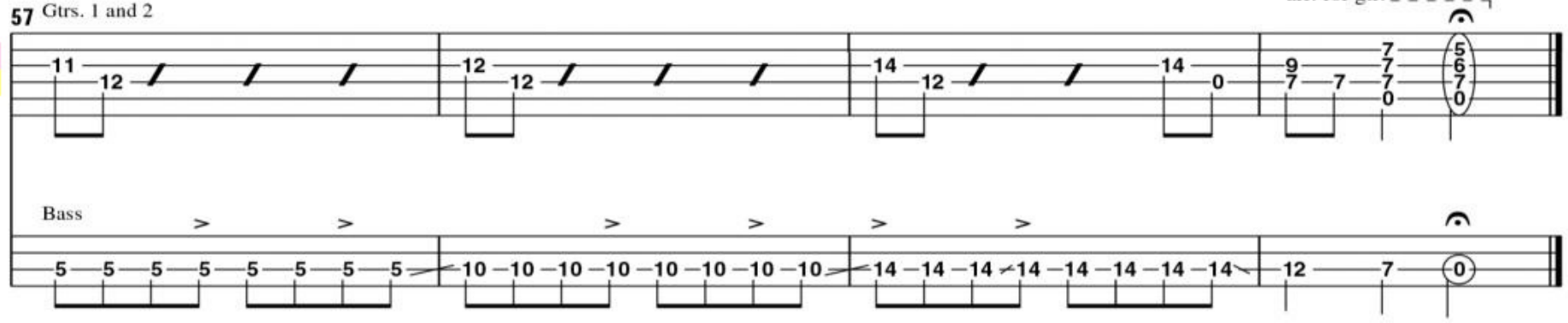
Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 twice (see meas. 29), then Bass Fig. 3 third time (see meas. 33)

never

(D) (G5) (Bm7) A5 D/A A

synth and gtr.
arr. for gtr.

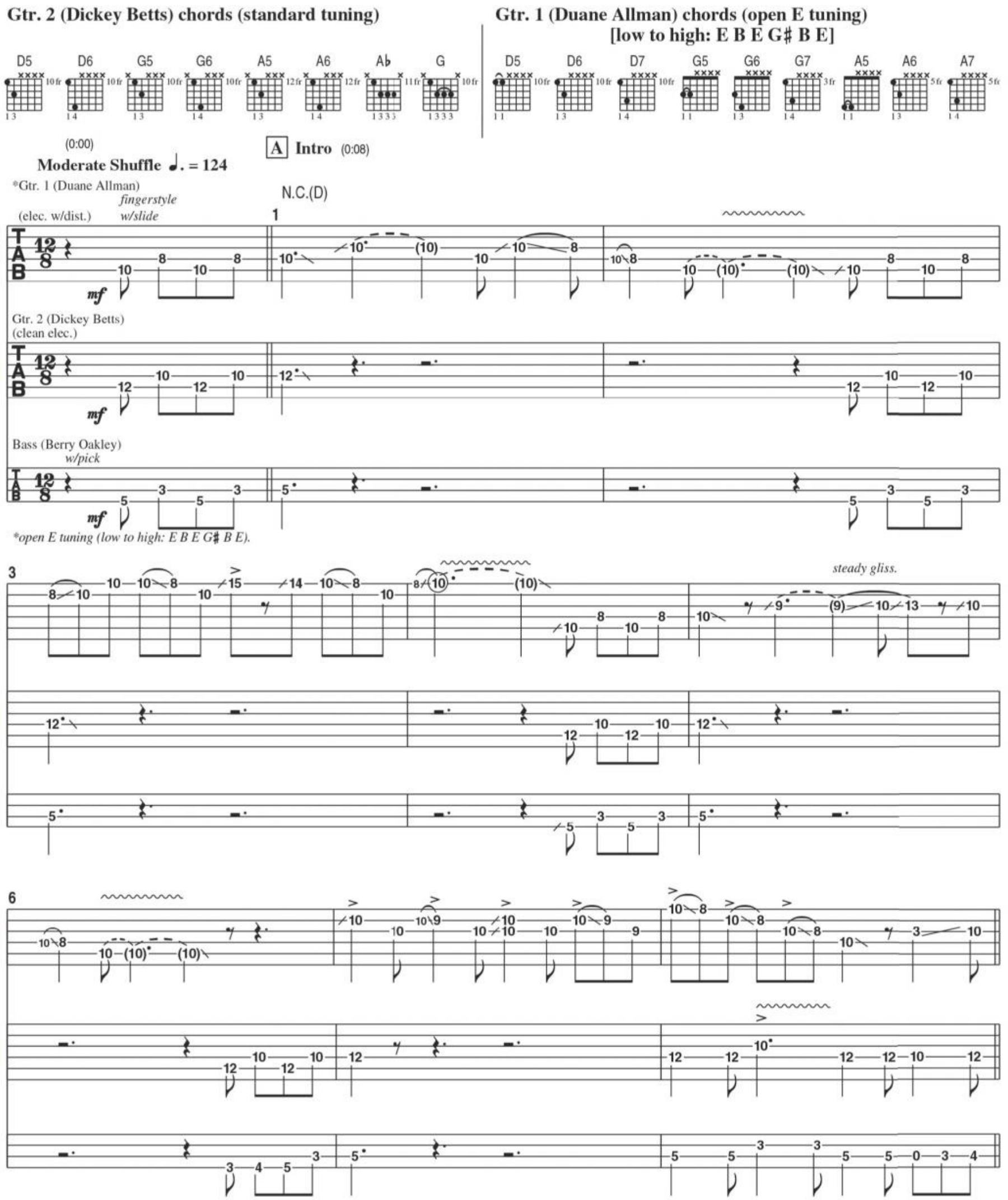
57 Gtrs. 1 and 2



"STATESBORO BLUES"

Allman Brothers Band

As heard on **AT FILLMORE EAST**

Words and Music by **WILLIE McTELL** • *Transcribed by* **ANDY ALEDORT**

"STATESBORO BLUES"
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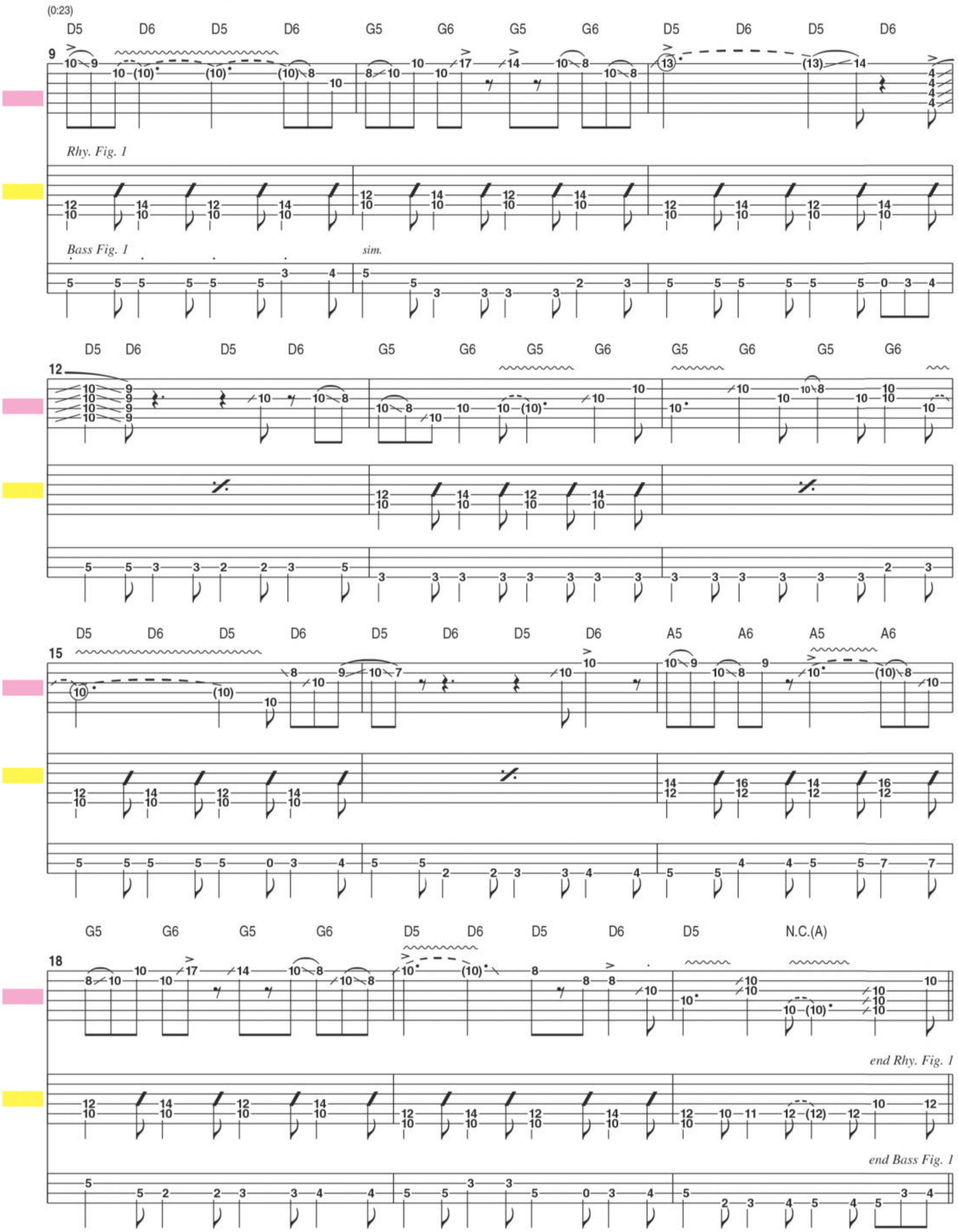
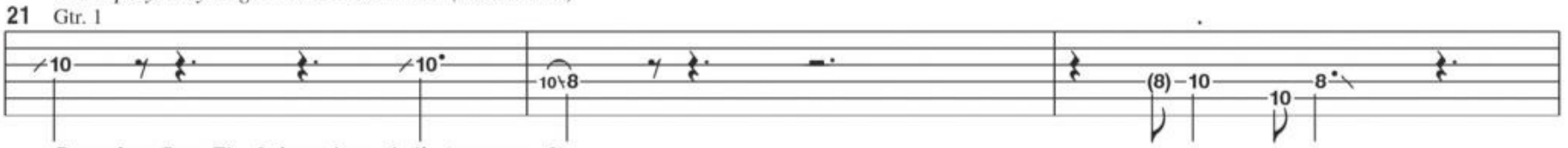

(0:23)
D5 D6 D5 D6 G5 G6 G5 G6 D5 D6 D5 D6
9
Rhy. Fig. 1
Bass Fig. 1
sim.
D5 D6 D5 D6 G5 G6 G5 G6 G5 G6 G5 G6
12
D5 D6 D5 D6 D5 D6 D5 D6 A5 A6 A5 A6
15
G5 G6 G5 G6 D5 D6 D5 D6 D5 N.C.(A)
18
end Rhy. Fig. 1
end Bass Fig. 1

B **1st Verse** (0:47)

Wake up mama turn your lamp down low

D5 D6 D5 D6 G5 G6 G5 G6 D5 D6 D5 D6

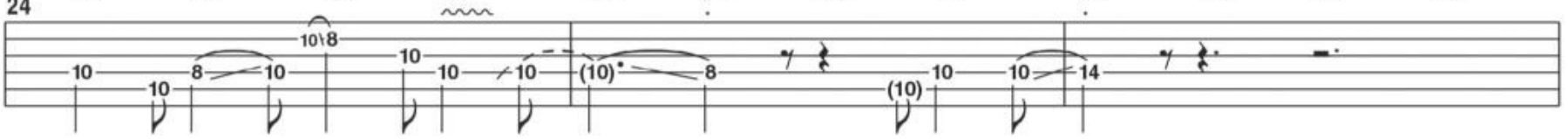
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 three times simile (see meas. 9)

21 Gtr. 1

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 three times simile (see meas. 9)

Wake up mama turn your lamp down low

D5 D6 D5 D6 G5 G6 G5 G6 G5 G6 G5 G6

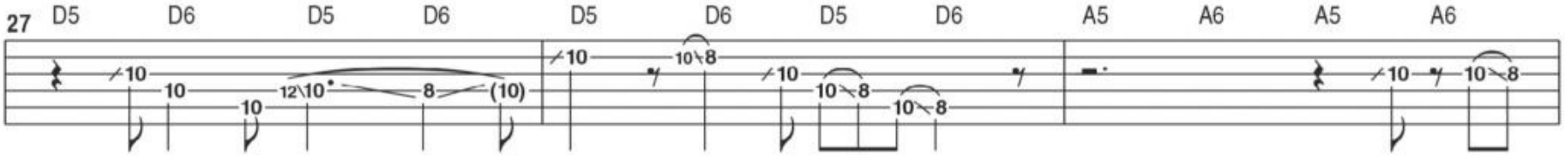
24



You got no nerve baby

D5 D6 D5 D6 D5 D6 D5 D6 A5 A6 A5 A6

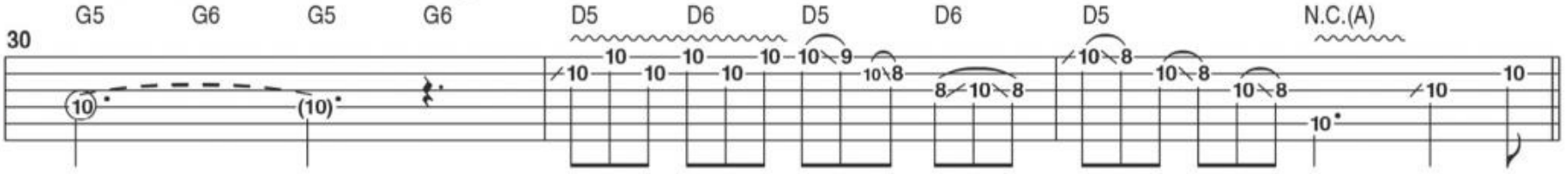
27



to turn Uncle John from your door

G5 G6 G5 G6 D5 D6 D5 D6 D5 N.C.(A)

30

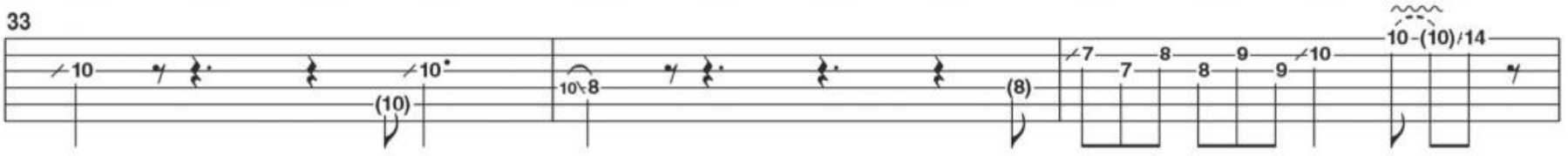


C **2nd Verse** (1:09)

I woke up this mornin' I had them Statesboro blues

D5 D6 D5 D6 G5 G6 G5 G6 D5 D6 D5 D6

33

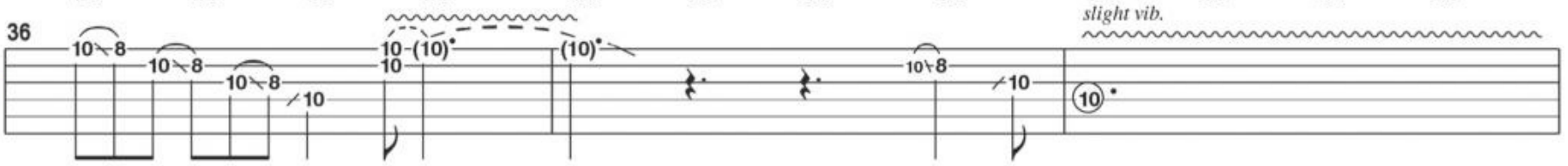


I woke up this mornin' I had them Statesboro blues

D5 D6 D5 D6 G5 G6 G5 G6 G5 G6 G5 G6

slight vib.

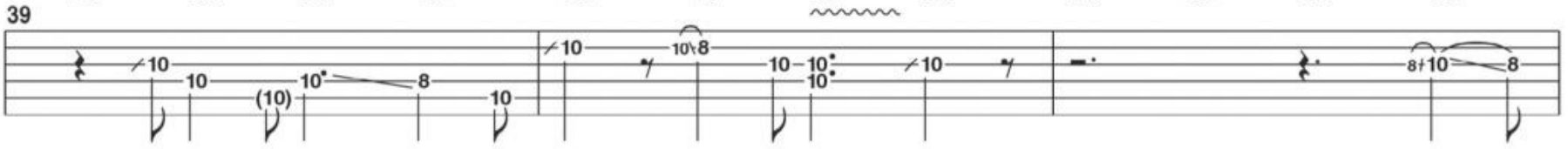
36



Well I looked over in the corner baby

D5 D6 D5 D6 D5 D6 D5 D6 A5 D6 A5 D6

39

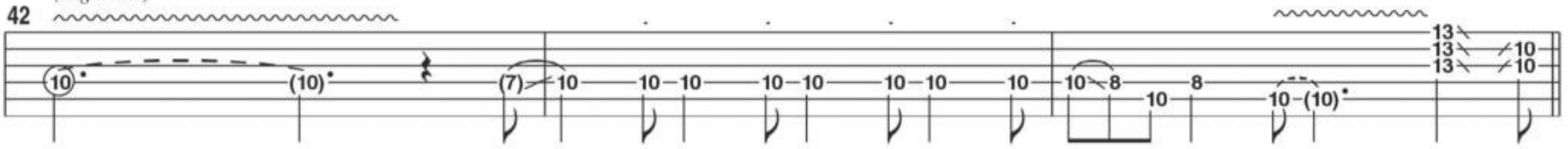


an' grandma seemed to have them too Oh

G5 G6 G5 G6 D5 D6 D5 D6 D5 N.C.(A)

(slight vib.)

42



18+

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME-

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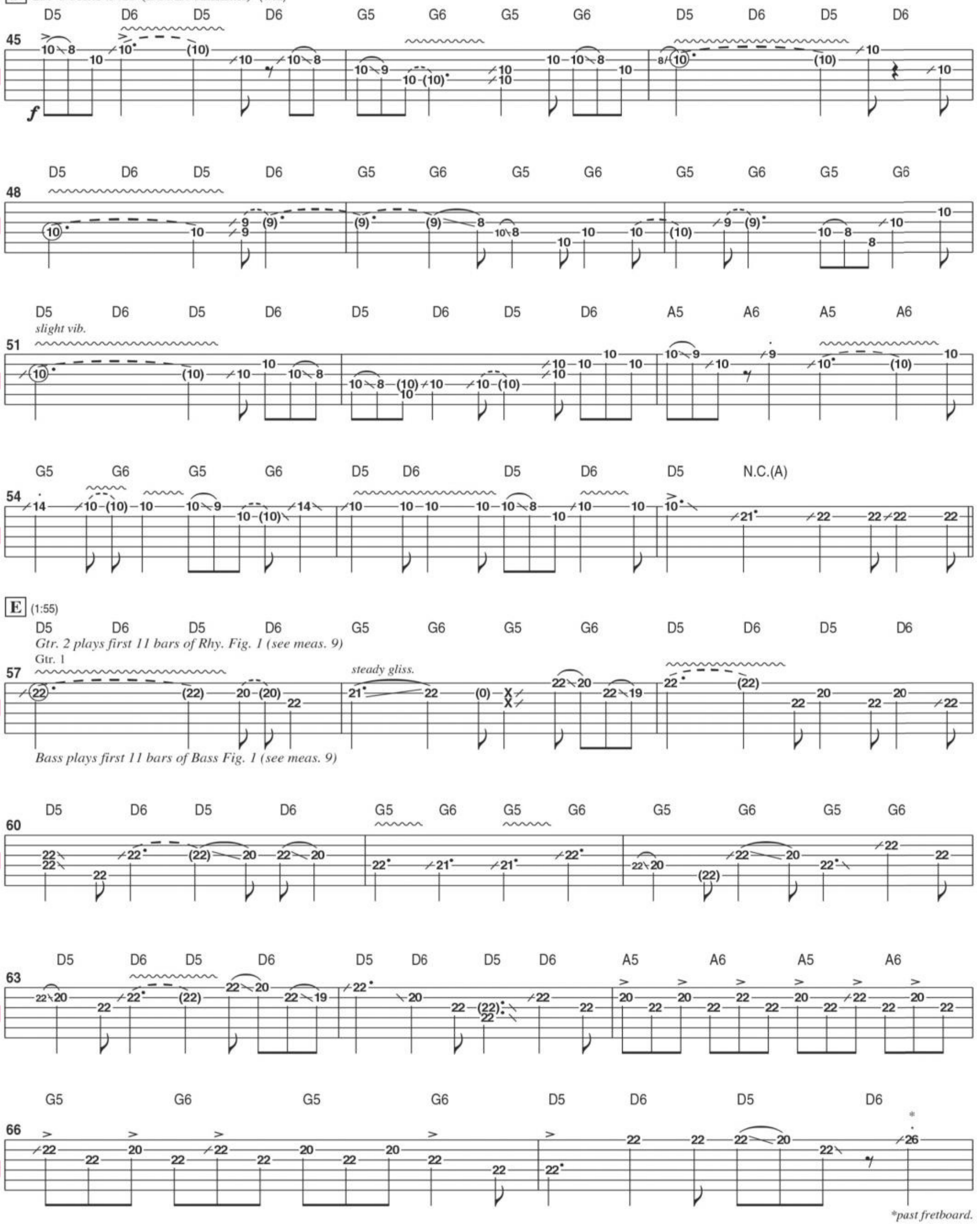
D **1st Guitar Solo (Duane Allman)** (1:32)

E (1:55)

F 3rd Verse/Break (2:18)

Well my mama died and left me My

D5 N.C.(A) N.C.(D)

Gtr. 1

68

Gtr. 2

Bass

papa died and left me I ain't good lookin' baby but I'm someone sweet and kind

70 *(repeat previous measure)*

Ab G

I'm goin' to the country baby do you wanna go

G5 G6 G5 G6 G5 G6 G5 G6 D5 D6 D5 D6

Gtr. 1

73 *slight vib.*

Bass plays bars 5-12 of Bass Fig. 1 simile (see meas. 13)

But if you can't make it baby your sister Lucille said she'd wanna go

D5 D6 D5 D6 A5 A6 A5 A6 G5 G6 G5 G6 D5 D6 D5 D6

76

G 2nd Guitar Solo (Dickey Betts) (2:41)

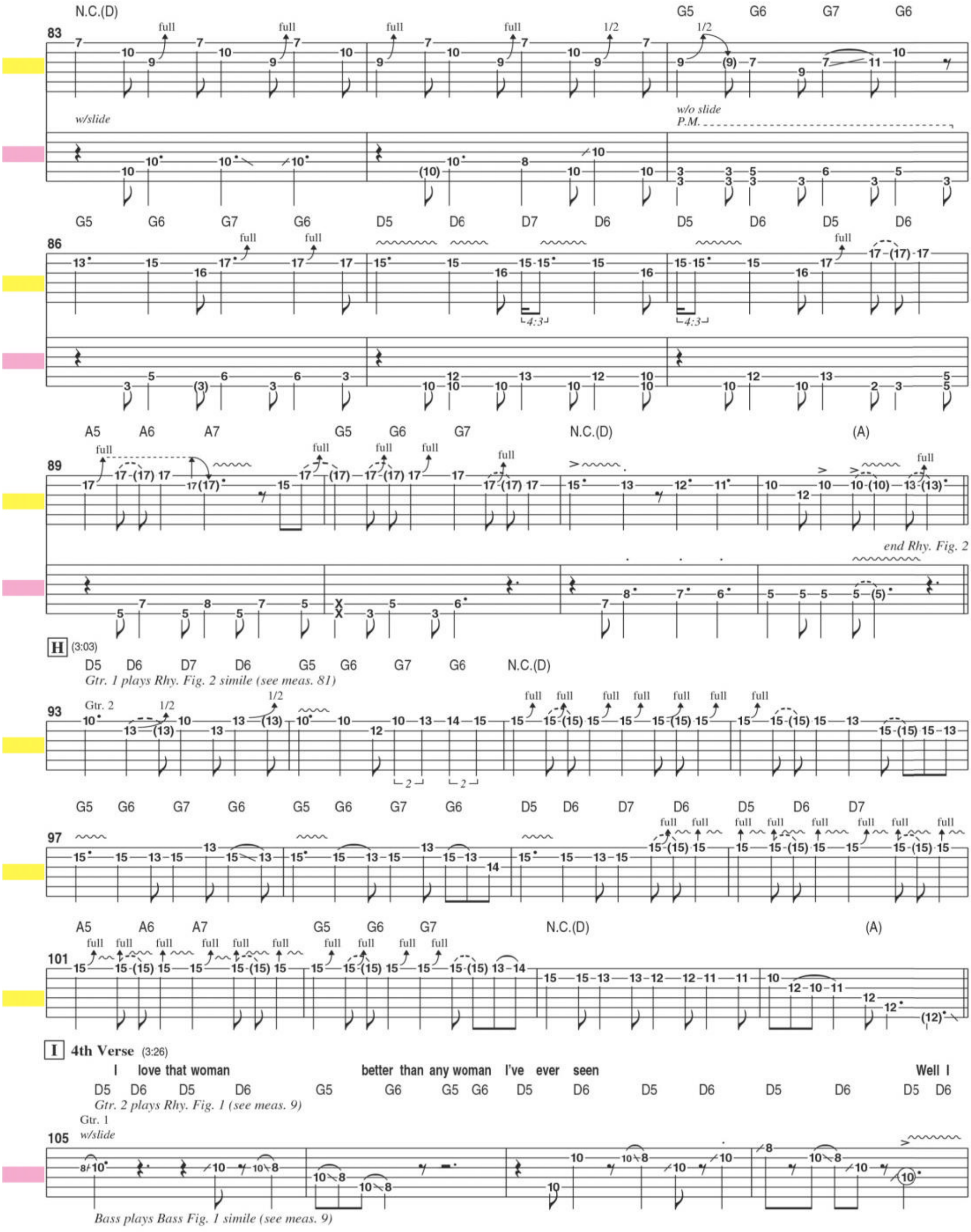
Well I sure will take her

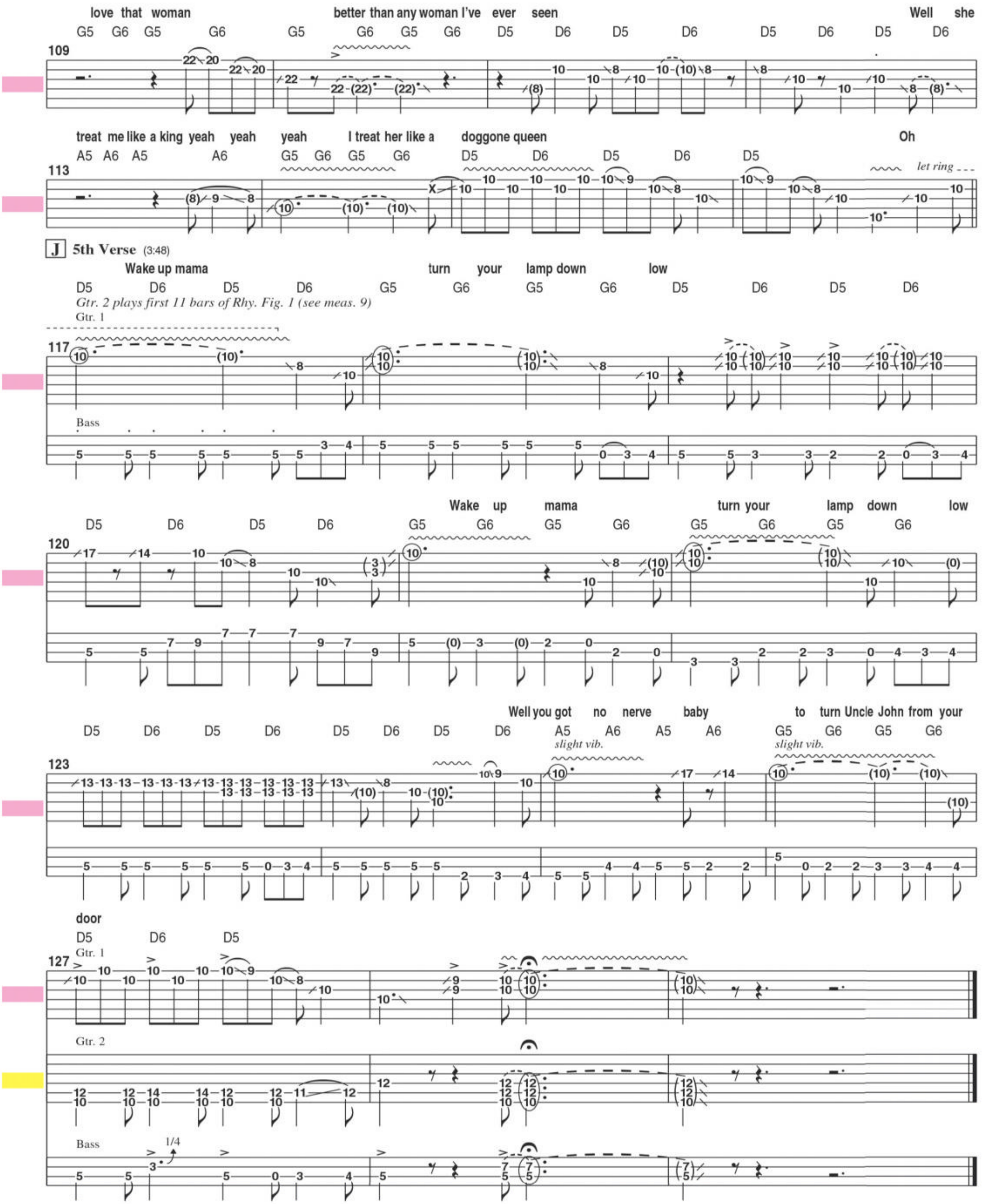
D5 N.C.(A) D5 D6 D7 D6 G5 G6 G7 G6

80 Gtr. 2 *(w/dist.) full full

*turn up volume

Gtr. 1 *Rhy. Fig. 2* *sim.*

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 twice simile (see meas. 9)

N.C.(D)
G5 G6 G7 G6
83
full
1/2
w/slide
w/o slide
P.M.
G5 G6 G7 G6 D5 D6 D7 D6 D5 D6 D5 D6
86
full
4:3
A5 A6 A7 G5 G6 G7 N.C.(D) (A)
89
full
end Rhy. Fig. 2
H (3:03)
D5 D6 D7 D6 G5 G6 G7 G6 N.C.(D)
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 simile (see meas. 81)
93
Gtr. 2
1/2
G5 G6 G7 G6 G5 G6 G7 G6 D5 D6 D7 D6 D5 D6 D7
97
A5 A6 A7 G5 G6 G7 N.C.(D) (A)
101
I 4th Verse (3:26)
I love that woman better than any woman I've ever seen Well I
D5 D6 D5 D6 G5 G6 G5 G6 D5 D6 D5 D6 D5 D6 D5 D6
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 (see meas. 9)
Gtr. 1
105
w/slide
Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 simile (see meas. 9)


love that woman
better than any woman I've ever seen
Well she
G5 G6 G5 G6 G5 G6 G5 G6 D5 D6 D5 D6 D5 D6 D5 D6
109
treat me like a king yeah yeah yeah I treat her like a doggone queen
Oh
A5 A6 A5 A6 G5 G6 G5 G6 D5 D6 D5 D6 D5
113
let ring
J 5th Verse (3:48)
Wake up mama
turn your lamp down low
D5 D6 D5 D6 G5 G6 G5 G6 D5 D6 D5 D6
Gtr. 2 plays first 11 bars of Rhy. Fig. 1 (see meas. 9)
Gtr. 1
117
Bass
Wake up mama
turn your lamp down low
D5 D6 D5 D6 G5 G6 G5 G6 G5 G6 G5 G6
120
Well you got no nerve baby
to turn Uncle John from your
D5 D6 D5 D6 D5 D6 D5 D6 A5 A6 A5 A6 G5 G6 G5 G6
slight vib.
slight vib.
123
door
D5 D6 D5
Gtr. 1
127
Gtr. 2
Bass
1/4

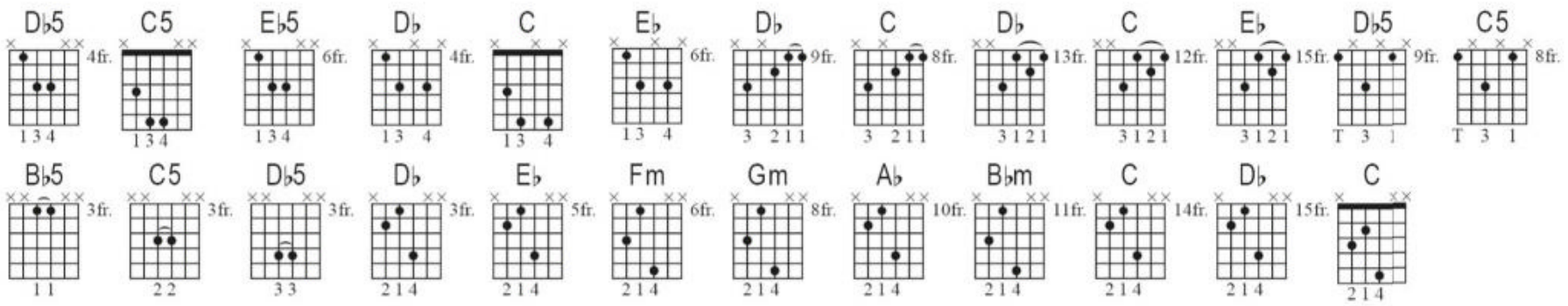
"THE SAILS OF CHARON"

Scorpions

As heard on **TAKEN BY FORCE**

Words and Music by **ULI ROTH** • *Transcribed by* **JEFF PERRIN**

All guitars are tuned down one half step (low to high: E♭, A♭, D♭, G♭, B♭, E♭).
Bass tuning (low to high): E♭, A♭, D♭, G♭.
All music sounds in the key of B (B Phrygian-dominant), one half step lower than written.



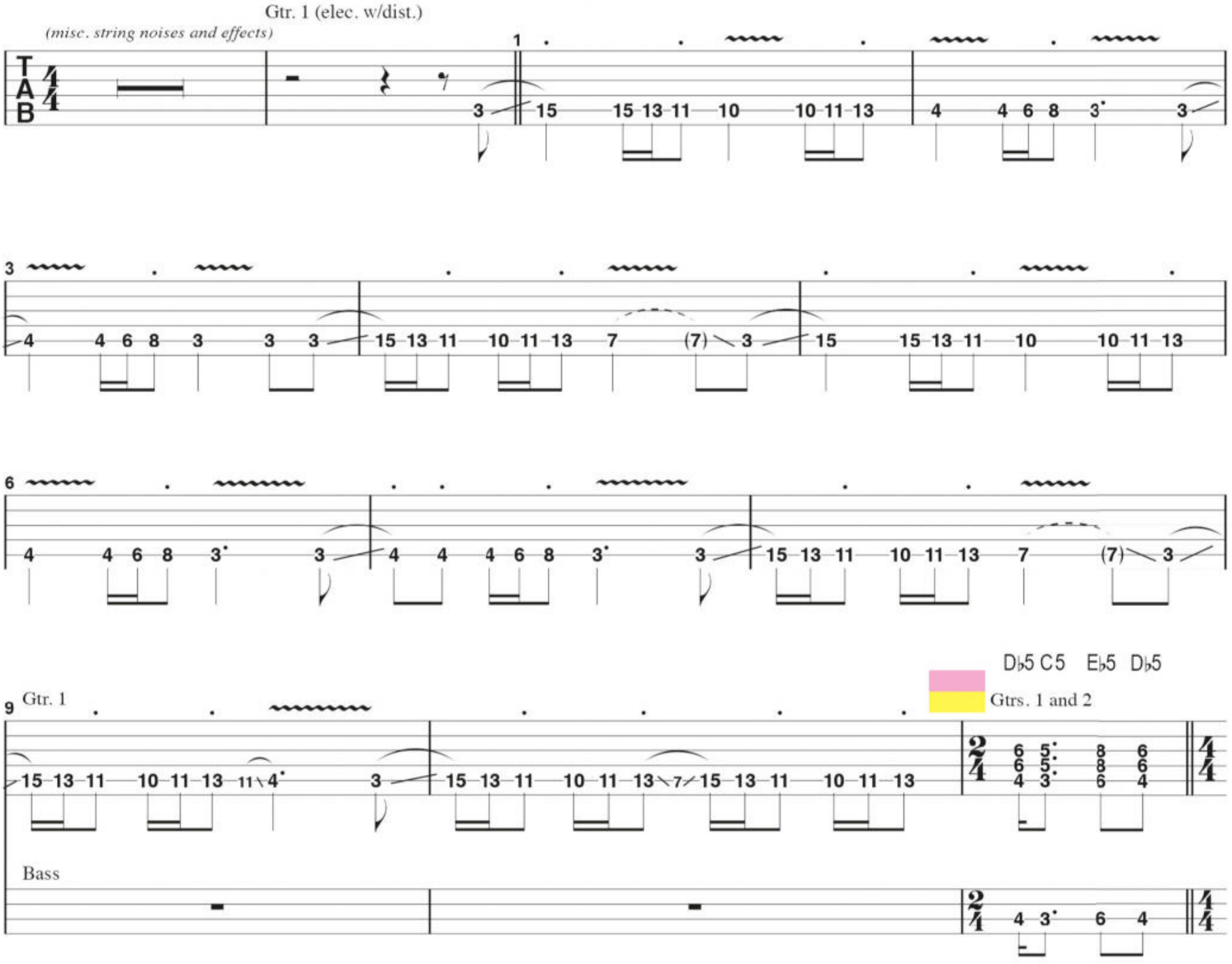
A **Intro** (0:00)

(0:53)

Moderately Fast ♩ = 110

N.C. (C)

Gtr. 1 (elec. w/dist.)

(misc. string noises and effects)

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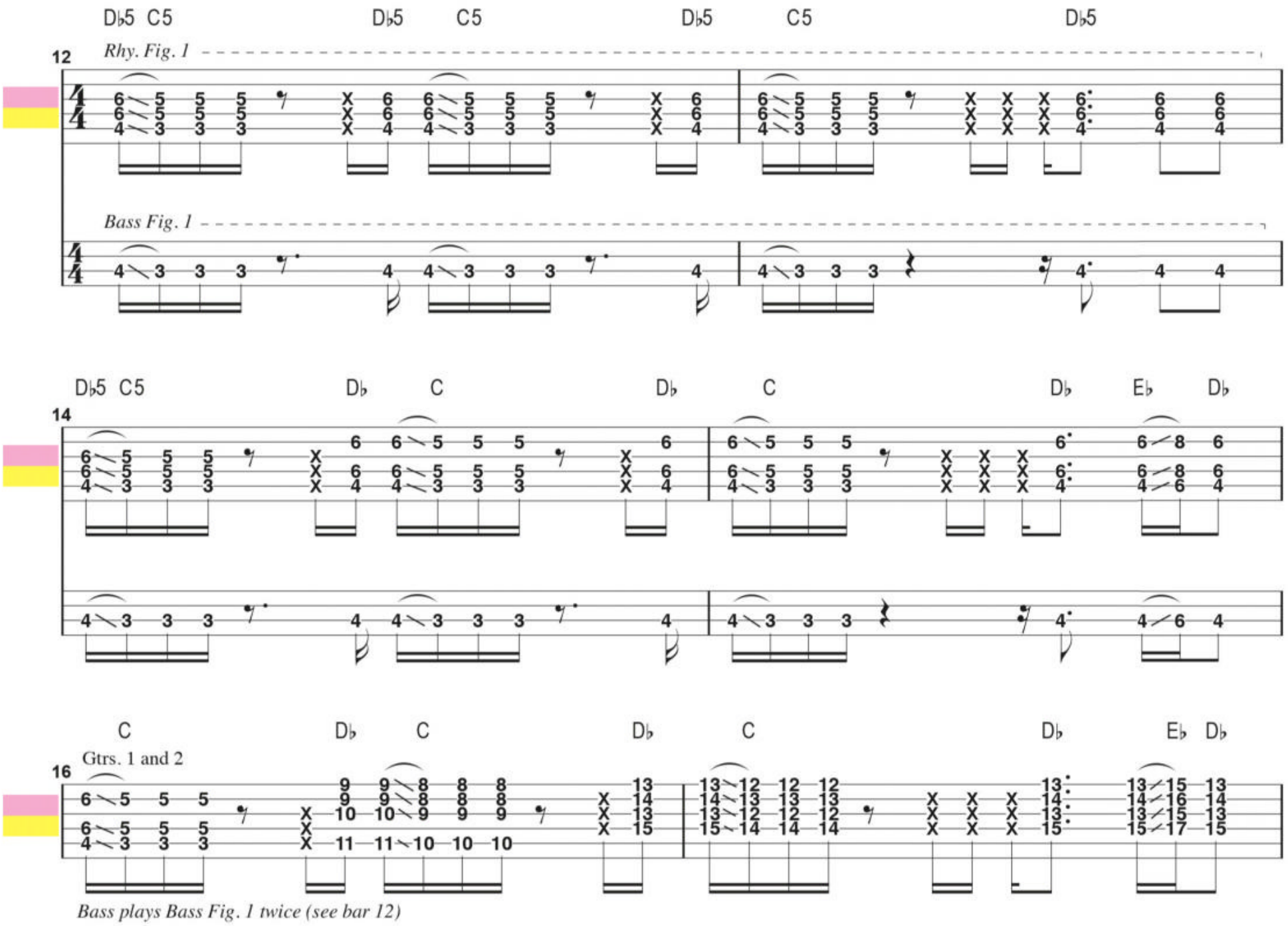
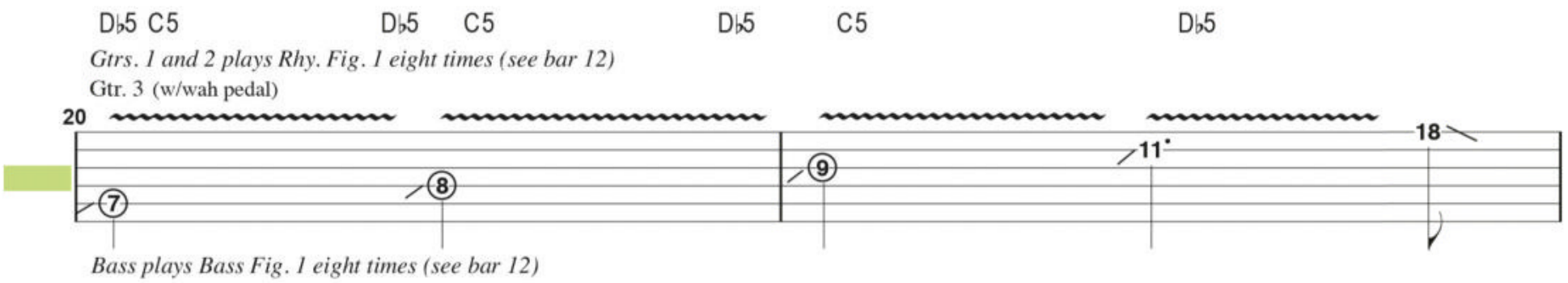
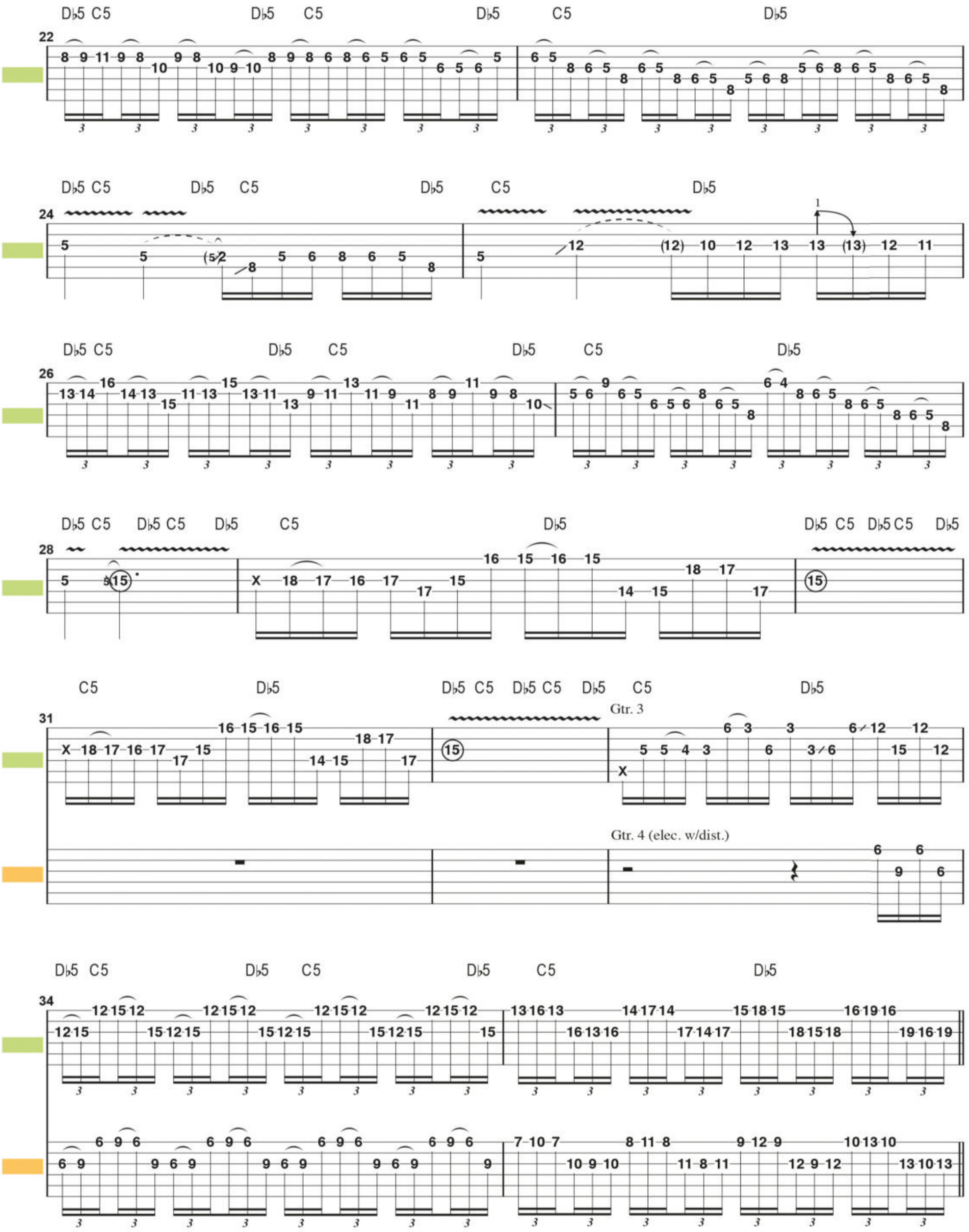
B (1:16)



C **Intro Guitar Solo** (1:33)




D♭5 C5
22
24
26
28
31
34
Gtr. 3
Gtr. 4 (elec. w/dist.)

D (2:08)

C5 B♭5 C5 D♭5 C5 B♭5 D♭5 C5 B♭5

Gtr. 3

36

1/2 1/2 1/2

Gtrs. 1 and 2

Rhy. Fig. 2

Bass

Bass Fig. 2

C5 B♭5 C5 D♭5 C5 B♭5 D♭5 C5 B♭5

Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 36)

Gtr. 3

38

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 36)

E **1st and 2nd Verses** (2:17, 2:34)

1. Dark night there is no light in the realm of the black magic
2. Poor man Those spirits are stronger There the one's who will reign Your struggles are

C5 B♭5 C5 D♭5 C5 B♭5 D♭5 C5 B♭5 C5 B♭5 C5 D♭5

Gtr. 3 plays Fill 1, first time (see below)

Gtrs. 1 and 2 substitute Rhy. Fill 1 second time (see below)

Gtrs. 1 and 2

40

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 twice (see bar 36)

F (3:09)

man in vain (2., 3.) Souls flight into the cold blight of the destroyers
Blind man You're sucking your own blood Soon black magic's

C5 B♭5 D♭5 C5 B♭5 C5 B♭5 C5 D♭5 C5 B♭5 D♭5 C5 B♭5

Gtrs. 1 and 2 substitute Rhy. Fill 1 third time (see below)

43

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 36)

Fill 1 (2:17)

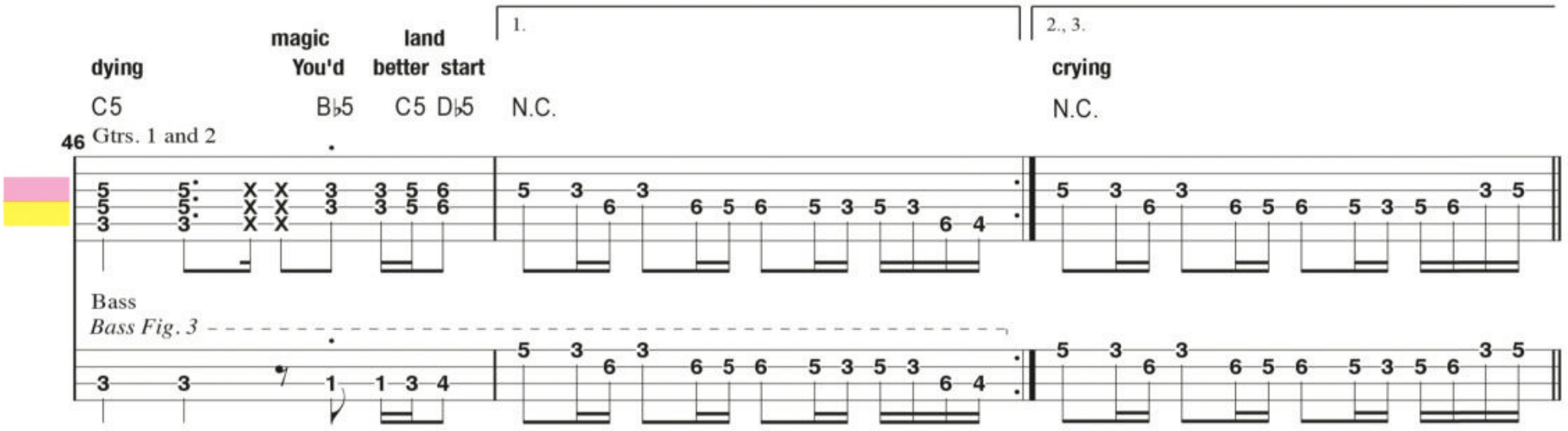
C5 B♭5 C5 D♭5

Gtr. 3

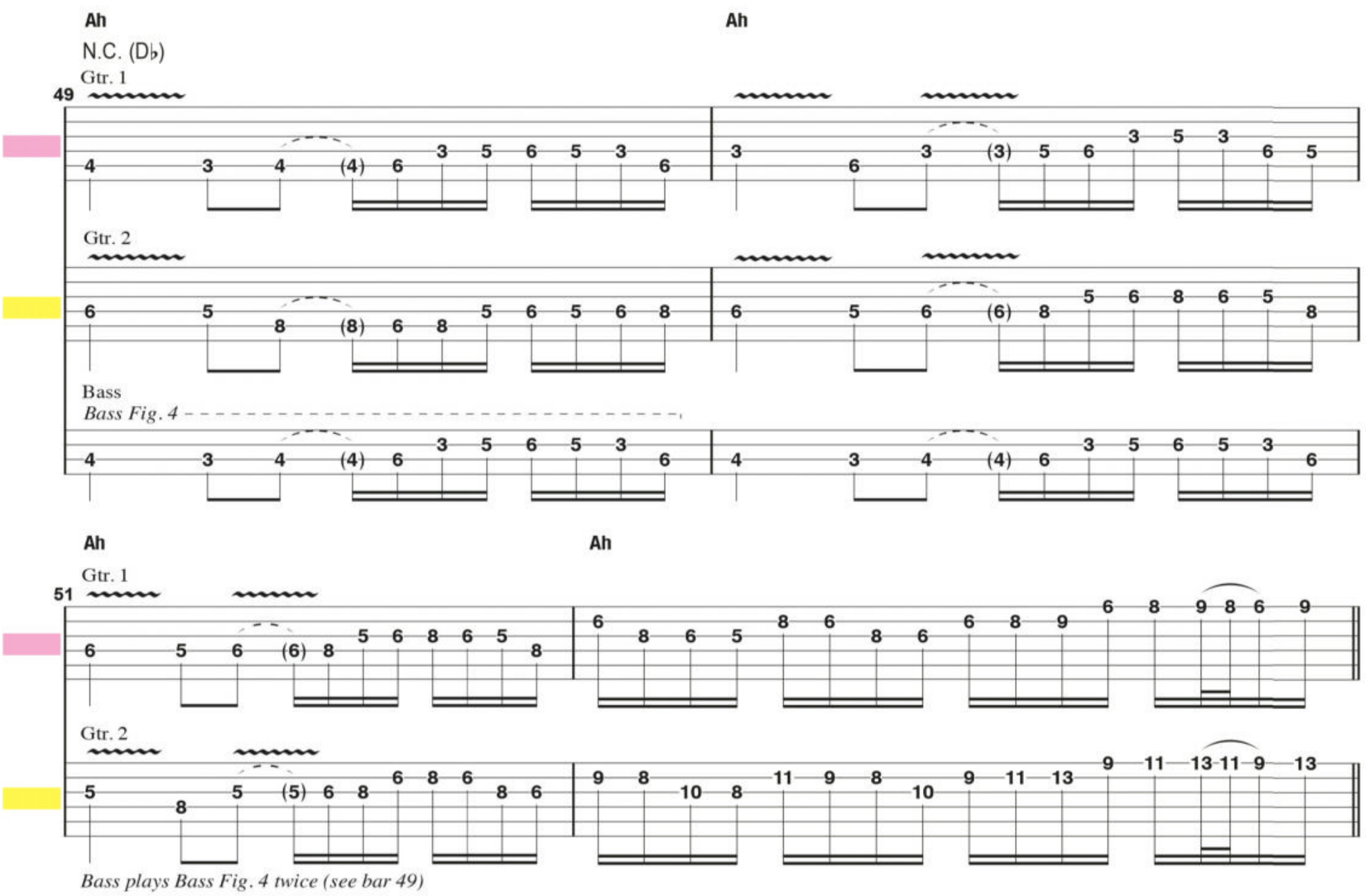
Rhy. Fill 1 (2:34, 3:09)

C5 B♭5 C5 D♭5

Gtrs. 1 and 2

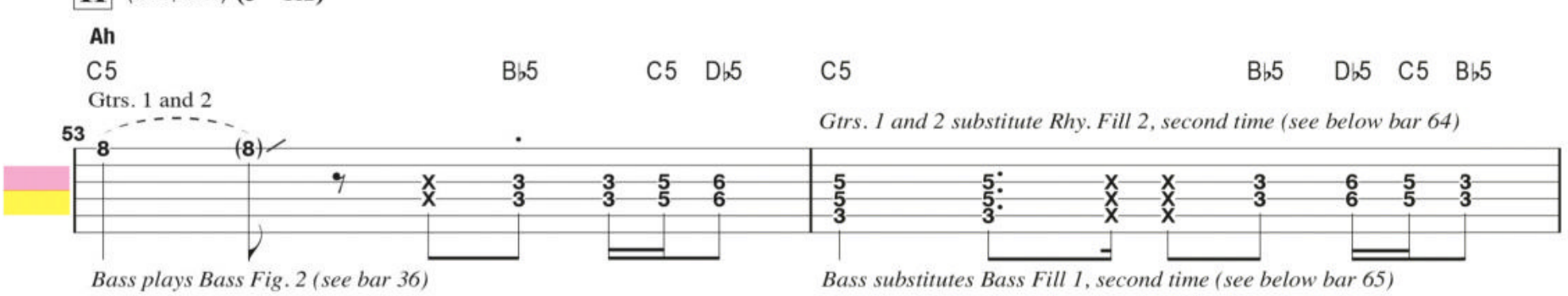


G (2:52, 3:17) (♩ = 116)



Bass plays Bass Fig. 4 twice (see bar 49)

H (3:00, 3:26) (♩ = 112)



Gtrs. 1 and 2 substitute Rhy. Fill 2, second time (see below bar 64)

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 36)

Bass substitutes Bass Fill 1, second time (see below bar 65)

1st time, go back to F 3rd verse (bar 44)

C5 B♭5 C5 D♭5 N.C.

55

Bass plays Bass Fig. 3 (see bar 46)

I **4th Verse** (3:34)

Burn out Your evil desire The dark angels

C5 B♭5 C5 D♭5 C5 B♭5 D♭5 C5 B♭5

57

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 36)

kingdom is built out of mine

C5 B♭5 C5 D♭5 N.C.

59 Gtrs. 1 and 2

Bass

J (3:43)

N.C. (C)

61 Gtr. 1

64

Rhy. Fill 2 (3:29)

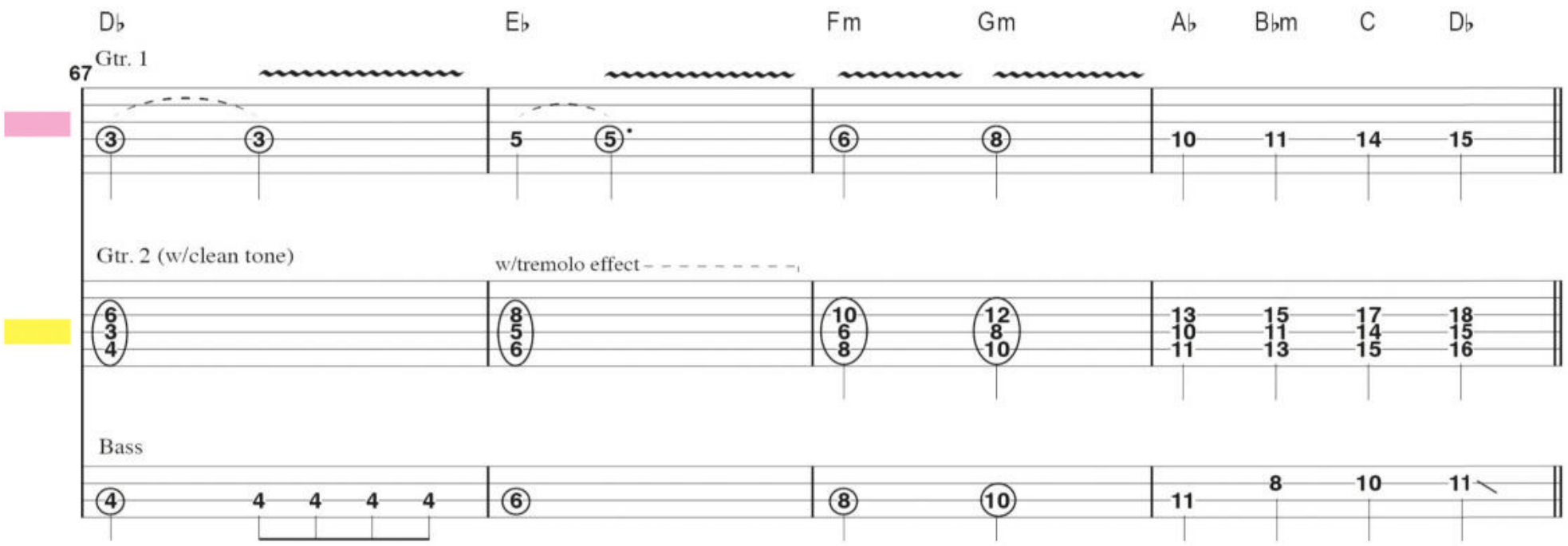
C5 B♭5 D♭5 C5 B♭5

Gtrs. 1 and 2

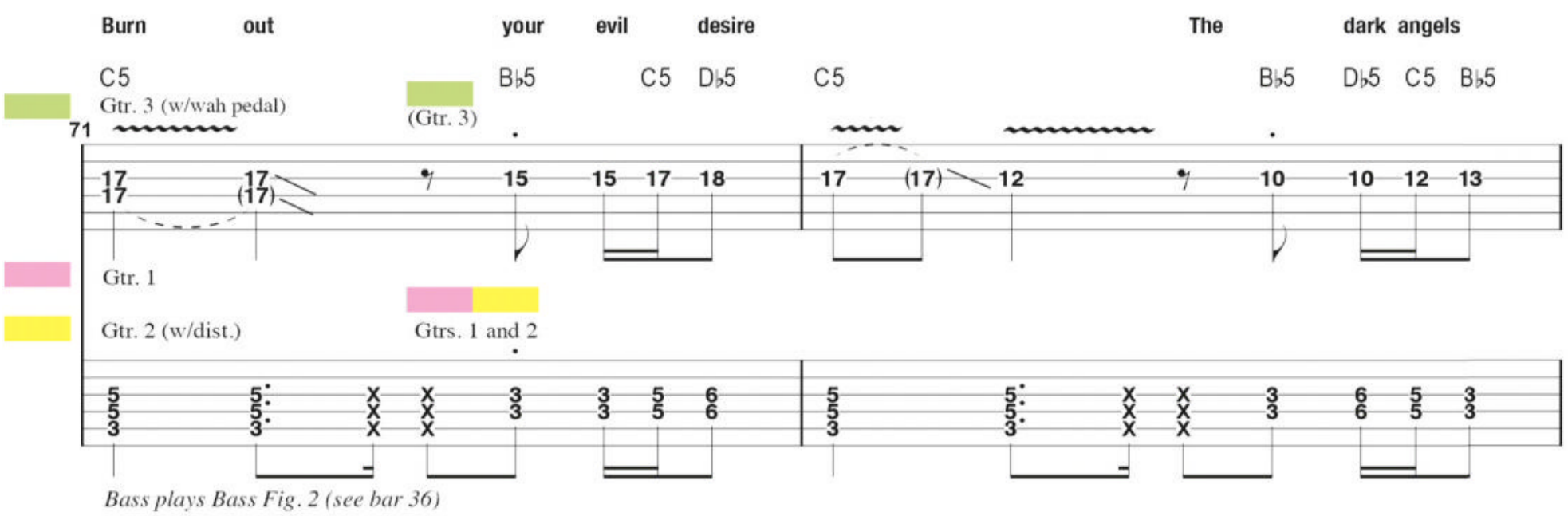
Bass Fill 1 (3:29)

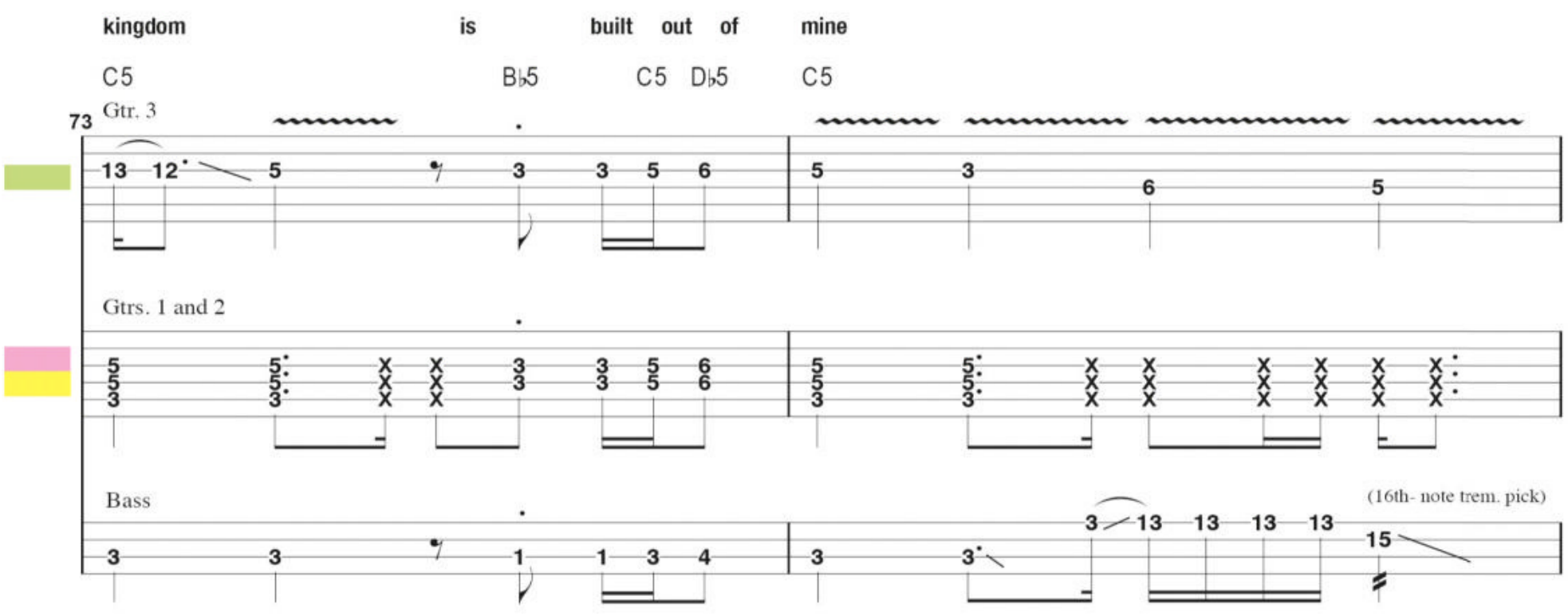
C5 B♭5 D♭5 C5 B♭5

K (3:56)



L **5th Verse** (4:04)





Keep on for the Kingdom of Light There is no

C5 B♭5 C5 D♭5 C5 B♭5 D♭5 C5 B♭5

Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Fig. 2 one and one half times (see bar 36)

Gtr. 3

75

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 36)

darkness There is no light

C5 B♭5 C5 D♭5 N.C.

77 Gtr. 3

Bass

M (4:21) **(♩ = 116)**

N.C. (D♭)

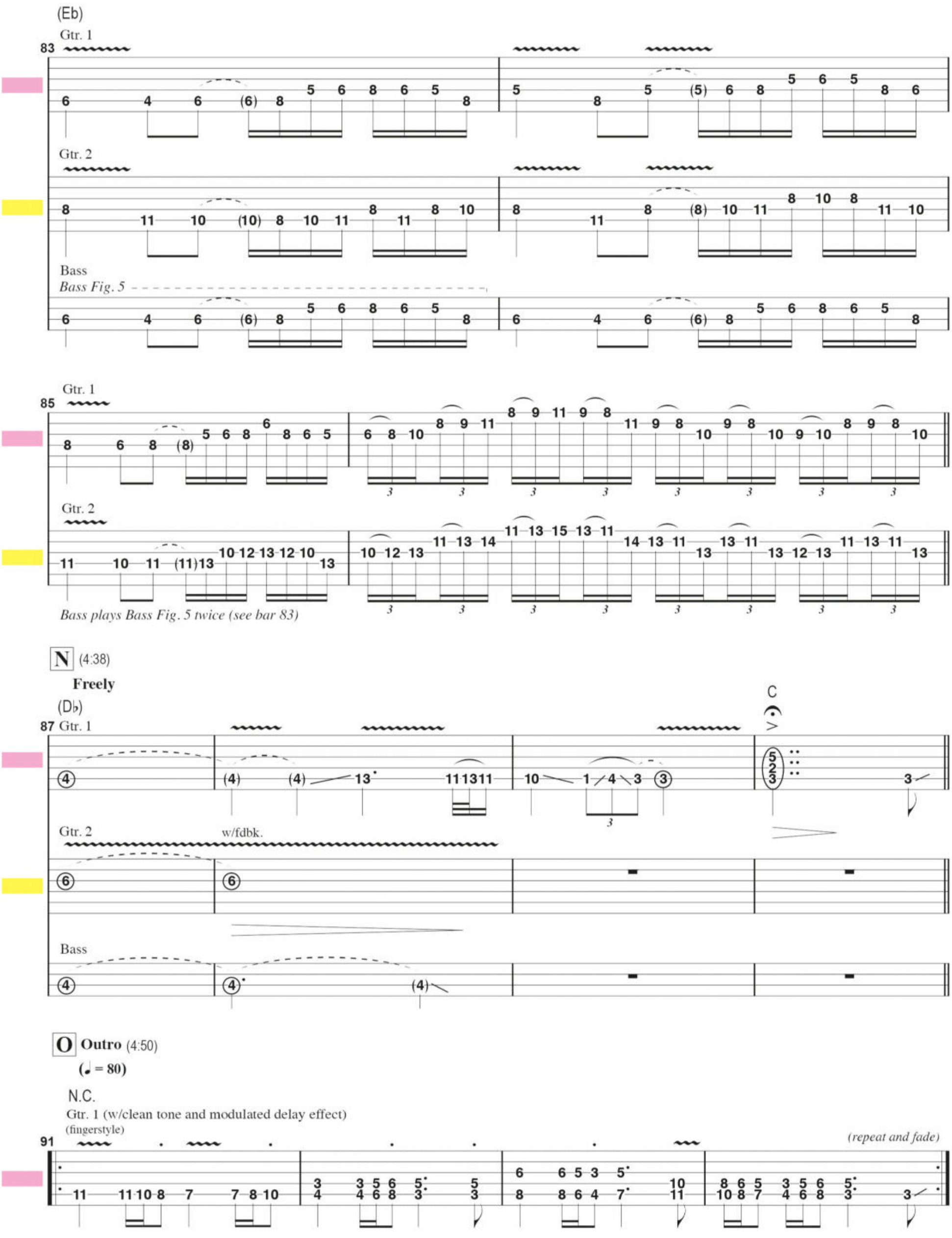
Gtr. 1

79

Gtr. 2

Bass plays Bass Fig. 4 four times (see bar 49)

81


(Eb)
Gtr. 1
83
Gtr. 2
Bass
Bass Fig. 5
Gtr. 1
85
Gtr. 2
Bass plays Bass Fig. 5 twice (see bar 83)
N (4:38)
Freely
(D♭)
87 Gtr. 1
C
Gtr. 2
w/fdbk.
Bass
O Outro (4:50)
(♩ = 80)
N.C.
Gtr. 1 (w/clean tone and modulated delay effect)
(fingerstyle)
91
(repeat and fade)

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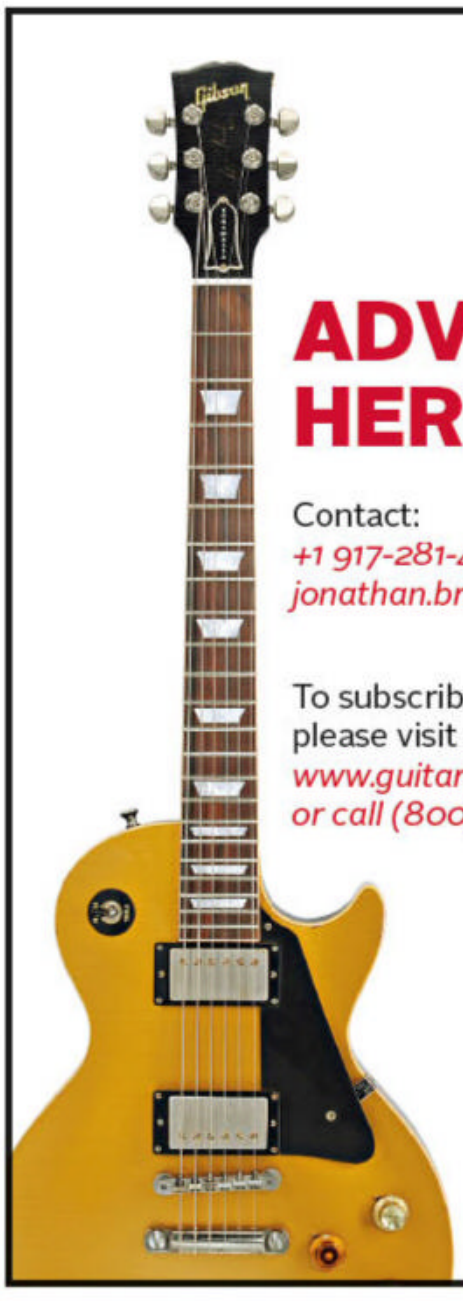

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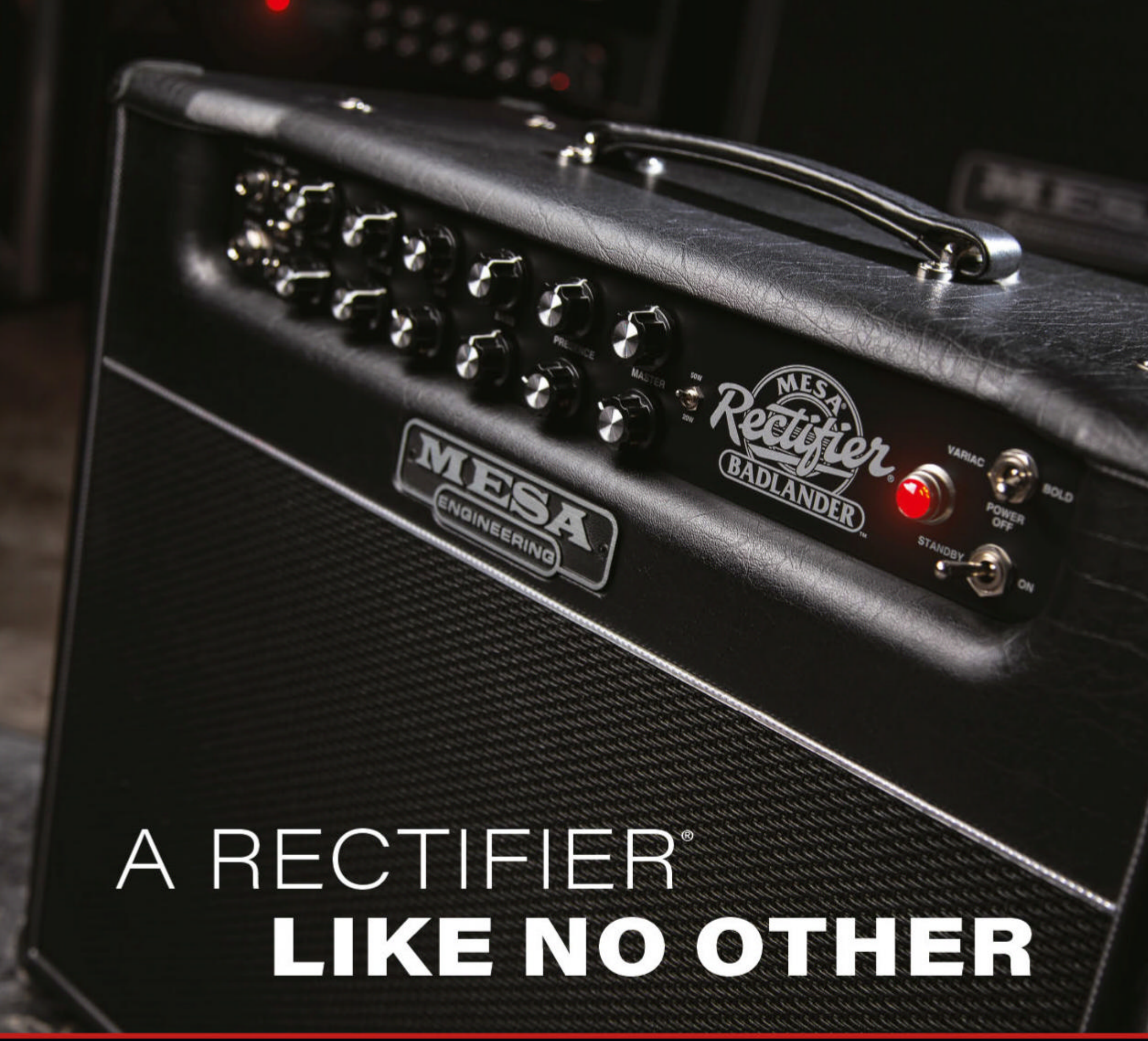

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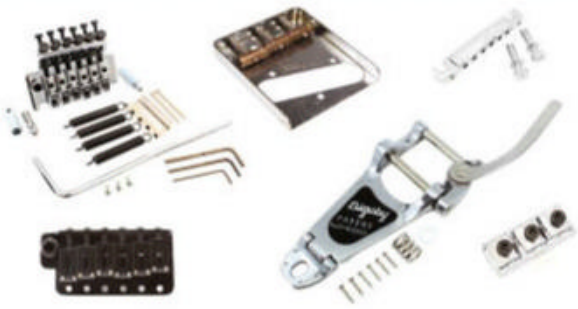

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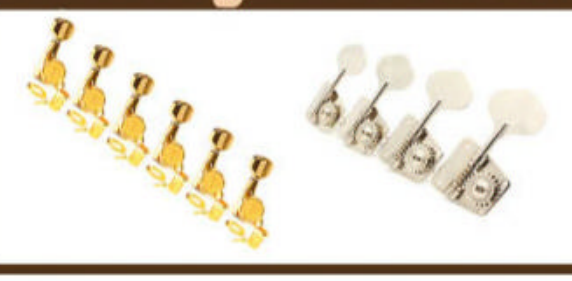

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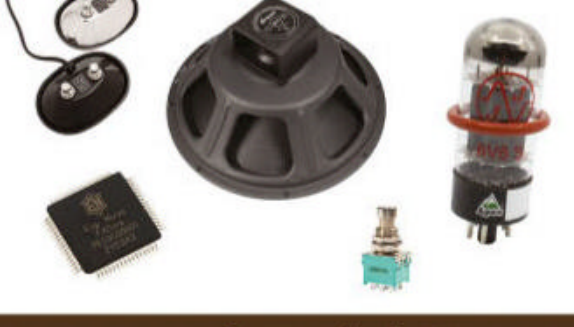

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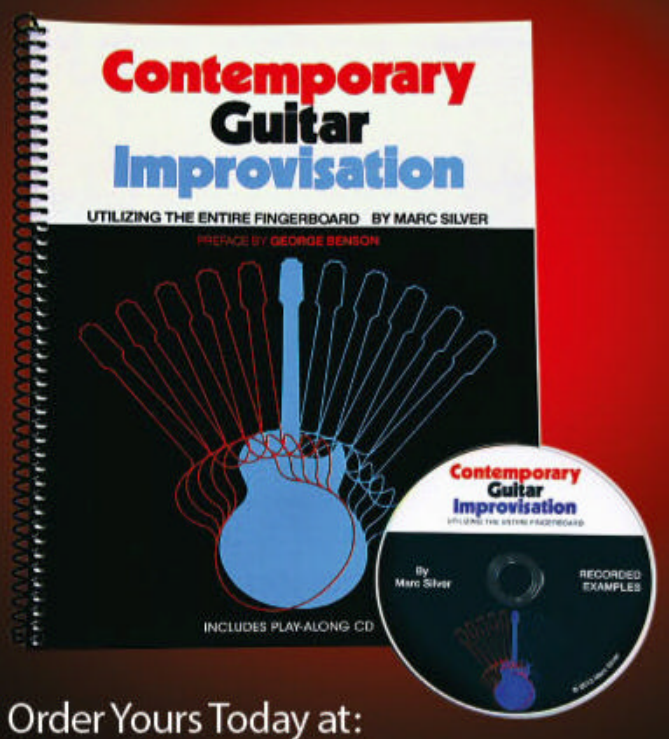

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"THE SAILS OF CHARON"

SCORPIONS | *TAKEN BY FORCE*, 1977 | GUITARIST: ULI JON ROTH | STORY BY CHRIS GILL

TO ME, THE four cornerstones of modern shred rock guitar are Al Di Meola's "Race with Devil on Spanish Highway," Michael Schenker with UFO on the live version of "Rock Bottom," Eddie Van Halen's "Eruption" and Uli Jon Roth with the Scorpions on "The Sails of Charon" — all four of which were recorded in 1977-78. The Scorpions song was the most "under the radar" of the four back in the day as the band hadn't yet broken through to radio airplay in the United States, but thanks to guitarists who discovered "The Sails of Charon" over the years, it has earned a rightful place as a highly influential shred classic.

Roth was heavily inspired by Jimi Hendrix, and his rig back in the Seventies reflected that influence, consisting of a Fender Stratocaster, Marshall Super Lead head (in Roth's case a 1972 model 1959T Super Lead Tremolo) with stacks of 4x12 speakers, a wah pedal and a changing variety of fuzz and phase shifter pedals. However, for "The Sails of Charon" Roth kept things surprisingly simple, using just his Strat, Marshall half-stack and a Vox Cry Baby wah to generate his tasteful lead tone.

Roth didn't use a ton of gain, preferring instead to turn up the volume just to the brink of overdrive to enhance sustain while maintaining an organic, dynamic tone generated by his Strat's bridge pickup, which he noted had higher output than most other Strats he had previously encountered. His rhythm tracks, played using the Strat's neck pickup, are super-slinky and clean. Roth used the wah only on his leads and solos as a midrange EQ control, generally keeping it in a fixed position about two thirds of the way down, although he occasionally would employ the rocker pedal to subtly enhance vocal-like inflections.

The craziest effect on the song appears at 3:55 in the full version (or at 3:05 on the more common edited version), where a synth-like rising pitch effect starts to percolate. This was probably created during mixing using an MXR Pitch Transposer. Queen featured a similar effect created by the MXR unit on "Get Down, Make Love," which was recorded about the same time.

Although it does not appear on this particular song, the Roland AP-7 Jet Phaser played an important role in Roth's Hendrix-like solos on the *Taken by Force* album ("I've Got to be Free," "We'll Burn the Sky," "Your Light") and earlier tracks (particularly "Polar Nights"). I've included a typical Jet Phaser control setting Roth used for anyone who wants to explore further.

Uli Jon Roth performs at the Country Club in Reseda, California, May 17, 1985

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- Squier Affinity Series Stratocaster with maple fingerboard
- Seymour Duncan Hot Strat bridge pickup
- Marshall Origin ORI50C
- Vox V847-A wah
- Bonus! Warm Audio Jet Phaser

TONE TIP: *Use the Marshall's Gain control conservatively. Roth's lead tone was cleaner than one might expect, and much of the body and sustain came from the wah.*

ORIGINAL GEAR

GUITAR: 1975 Fender Stratocaster with maple fingerboard (bridge pickup lead/solos, neck pickup rhythm parts), Volume: 10, Tone 1: 10, Tone 2: 10

AMP: 1972 Marshall model 1959T Super Lead Tremolo 100-watt head (Speed: 0, Intensity: 0, Presence: 5, Bass: 3, Middle: 8, Treble: 7, Volume I: 6, Volume II: 0, Input I top left) into Marshall 1960B 4x12 cabinet with unknown speakers (most likely 25-watt Celestion G12M 55Hz)

EFFECTS: c. early Seventies Vox Cry Baby wah (sweep about 2/3 toe down), Bonus pedal (not used on this song): Roland AP-7 Jet Phaser (Jet Level: 8, Jet Mode: 2, Resonance: 6, Slow Rate: 1, Slow engaged)

STRINGS/TUNING: Brand unknown, .008, .011, .015, .026, .036, .046/ half-step down (E♭, A♭, D♭, G♭, B♭, E♭)

PICK: Jörgensen Heavy

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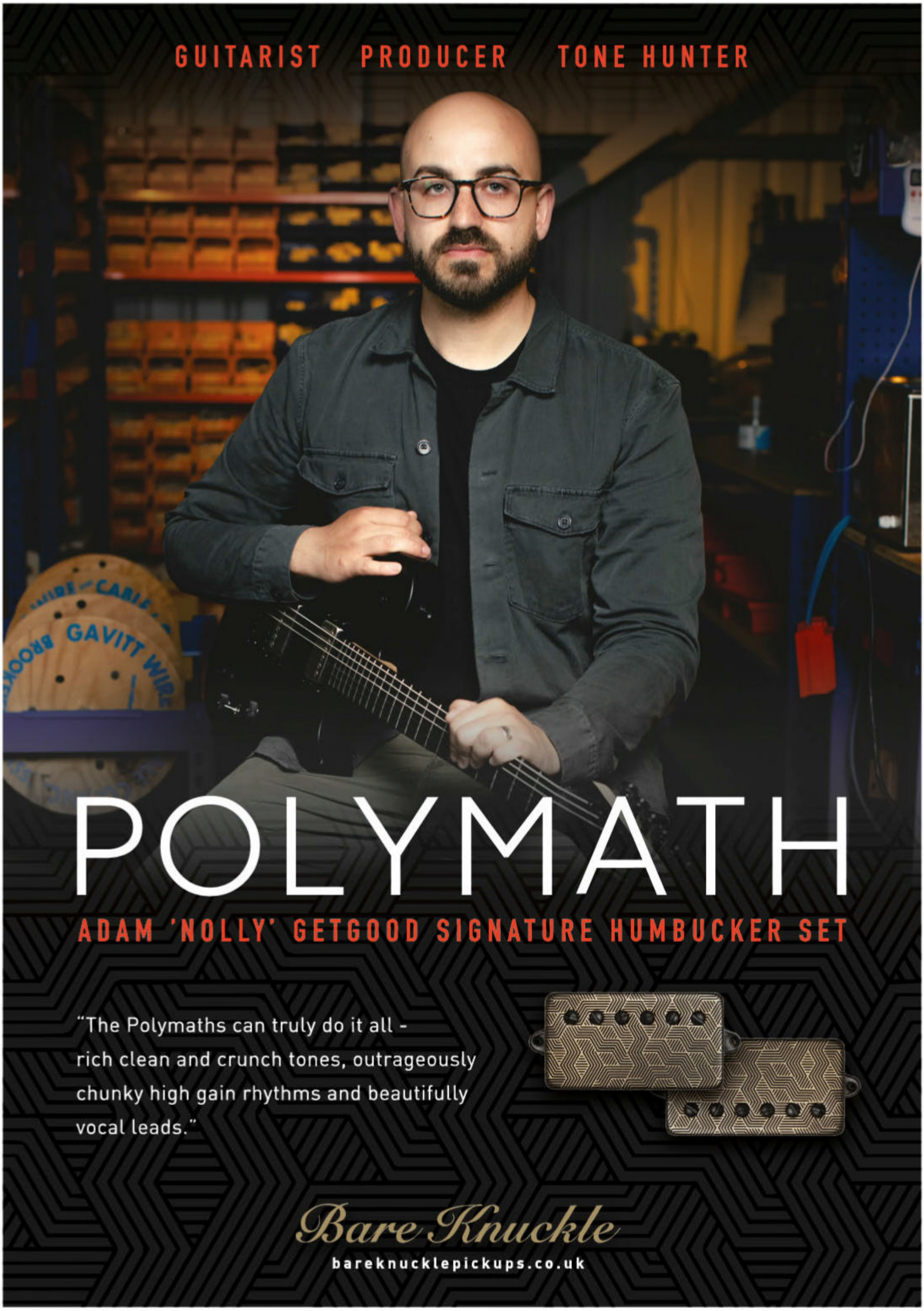
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